

Without a Trace

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Summary: Lucky and Liz deal with the kidnapping of their daughter. They must come to terms with their grief, as the mystery surrounding her disappearance unravels. Various other characters are involved in the plot, including Luke, Laura and Sonny.

Without a Trace

BACKGROUND: Set in the future, it centers around Lucky and Liz, with various other

>characters such as Luke, Laura and Sonny also being involved. All other necessary details will be revealed during the story as it progresses. I hope you enjoy it and please let me know what you think by reviewing it and/or e-mailing me with your comments at ILUVNYYANK@aol.com. Thanks! ~Steph

>

>. Without A Trace

>. . . . Chapter 1

>
 The sun shone through the large windows that decorated the entire

>Spencer home. The master bedroom was especially well endowed. The light cut
through the glass and landed on the faces of the happy occupants. Elizabeth

>Spencer rubbed at her eyes, not willing to leave her dreamland quite yet.
She finally opened them both up and smiled at her husband's peaceful face.

>She lifted a hand up to move a stray piece of hair out of his eyes. Even
after all this time, he still took her breath away. She moved her hand down

>to his cheek and leaned closer to him, whispering...

>Liz: Rise and shine.

> Lucky Spencer slowly opened his eyes at his wife's beckoning. He
smiled at her and reached his hand out to return the gesture on her own

>cheek. Then he squeezed his eyes shut and replied.

>Lucky: I don't want to get up just yet.

> Elizabeth smiled and leaned over to place a kiss on his lips,

mumbling while she did so.
>
Liz: Too bad...You have to be at work in an hour.
>
 Lucky groaned and pulled his pillow over his face. Elizabeth laughed
>and was just about to remove the pillow, when a very wide awake four year old
boy bounded into their room and onto their bed. Elizabeth laughed and
>wrapped her arms around the giggling child.

>Liz: Lorenzo! Good morning, honey, but haven't I told you to knock before
coming in?!
>
 Lorenzo looked up into his mother's face with all of the innocence of
>an angel. He replied smiling widely.

>Lorenzo: Yes, Mommy, but me wanted to tell you that Rugrats is on!

> Elizabeth smiled and tickled the boy's stomach. His blue eyes
sparkled in delight. Lorenzo stood up on the bed and leaned over his father,
>who had dozed off beneath the seclusion provided by his pillow. He picked up
the pillow and leaned down to his father's face. He giggled before placing a
>light kiss on his nose. Lucky only mildly reacted, stirring somewhat.
Elizabeth watched the loving gesture by her son and beamed. Lorenzo then
>decided to whisper in his ear...

>Lorenzo: Wake up, Daddy...Rugrats on.

> Lucky smiled slightly, but kept his eyes closed. Lorenzo then
decided to use Plan C. He placed his little face next to Lucky's and stuck
>his tongue out, licking his cheek. The boy pulled back laughing and Lucky
shot up. He smiled and grabbed his son, pulling him onto his lap.
>
Lucky: Lorenzo! Did you turn into a cat while you were sleeping last night?
>
 Lorenzo giggled and shook his head emphatically. Lucky smiled and
>kissed the boy's forehead.

>Lucky: 'Cause I think I'm allergic to cats!

> Lorenzo turned around and took his father's face in his little hands.
He leaned his face close to him so that their noses touched, whispering...
>
Lorenzo: Me not a cat, Daddy! ...Me a Spencer!
>
 Lucky and Elizabeth laughed, thinking the Spencer's were in many ways
>there own species. Elizabeth leaned over to Lorenzo and spoke softly..

>Liz: Okay, honey, now go try to get dressed by yourself. And please wake up
Lexi and tell her to do the same on your way to the bathroom.
>
 The little boy nodded, jumped off the bed and ran out of the room.
>Elizabeth smiled at Lucky and leaned her head down onto his chest.

>Liz: He's quite a character...Just like his grandfather.

> Lucky smiled and placed his arm around her shoulders.

>Lucky: Yup, he sure is a Spencer.

>::::::::::

> A few minutes later, Elizabeth walked down the hall and into her
daughter's room. She shook her head at the sleeping figure of six year old

>Lexi. She was flat on her back, her legs sprawled out in front of her.
Elizabeth watched her little chest go up and down, and the soft breaths that
>emerged from her lips from the action. Her blonde hair spread out around her
head, forming what resembled a halo. Elizabeth knelt beside her bed. She'd
>always loved watching her children sleep. Every night since they were born,
she'd go into their rooms for a few minutes and just watch them. She studied
>them, knowing they were safe and marveling at the miracles that she knew in
her heart that they were. She lifted a hand to the little girl's forehead,
>brushing back her bangs. Then she whispered to her.

>Liz: Lexi...Come on, honey, it's time to wake up now...You're going to be
late for school if you don't hurry.
>
Lexi moaned and rolled over on her side. Elizabeth sighed and spoke
>in a louder voice.

>Liz: Lexi, baby, you have to get up now.

>Lexi reluctantly opened her eyes and smiled half-heartedly at her
mother. Elizabeth smiled into her blue eyes. They both had their father's
>eyes...but Elizabeth's smile. Elizabeth loved looking into her children's
eyes, knowing that they were always a little piece of Lucky shining through.
>Lexi spoke softly.

>Lexi: Mommy, I can't go to school today...I'm sick.

>Elizabeth raised her eyebrows and placed her hand to the girl's
forehead again.
>
Liz: You don't have a fever.
>
Lexi motioned dramatically to her stomach.
>
Lexi: It's my stomach...it hurts so much.
>
Elizabeth smiled and shook her head. She had just remembered what
>day it was: Gym day. Lexi hated playing gym and every Thursday it was the
same routine.
>
Liz: Could this sudden sickness have anything to do with today being gym day?
>
Lexi's eyes widened and she shook her head.
>
Lexi: No, Mommy!..I'm really sick!
>
Elizabeth shook her head and pulled back her covers.

>
Liz: Well, let's see how you feel after breakfast...Come on...Get up, get
>ready.

>Lexi moaned, rolled her eyes and got out of bed. Elizabeth left her
room and went back to their room to shower and get dressed.

>
::::::::::
>
Lucky walked past his son's room, buttoning his shirt. He smiled and
>backed up, stopping at the doorway. The little boy was struggling with just
about everything. He'd just begun learning how to dress himself...and it was
>definitely an ongoing process. Lucky smiled at him.

>Lucky: Need some help there, Cowboy?

>Lorenzo's head popped up and he smiled shyly.

>Lorenzo: Yes, please.

>Lucky nodded and entered the room. He knelt in front of the boy and
surveyed him. He grinned at the sight and bit his lip to keep

from laughing.

> Lorenzo had created quite an ensemble. He was wearing plaid pants, a green,
blue and yellow striped button down shirt, and two different color socks.

>Lucky shook his head thinking, "He's no fashion designer, but he sure is
creative!" He unbuttoned the shirt that had been previously done with every

>third button. He rebuttoned it and then smiled at the boy, ruffling his hair.

>Lucky: All done! Don't you look like a handsome little man!

> Lorenzo chuckled and replied...

>Lorenzo: Grandpa says that "all Spencer men are handsome 'cause we have damn
good genes!"

>
 Lucky's eyes widened and he held in his laughter. Before he could

>reprimand the boy, Lorenzo whispered to him.

>Lorenzo: Daddy, what does "damn" mean?

> Lucky licked his lips and responded.

>Lucky: Lorenzo, that's a bad word that grown ups use when they aren't
supposed to. I don't want to hear you say it again, okay?

>
 Lorenzo nodded.

>
Lorenzo: How come Grandpa says it so much?

>
Lucky: Remember how I told you that Grandpa can be a little different

>sometimes?

> Lorenzo nodded.

>Lorenzo: And remember when I told you that sometimes we have to ignore what
he tells us eventhough he says it's really important?

>
 Lorenzo nodded again.

>
Lucky: Well, that's one of those times. Grandpa shouldn't say that in front

>of you.

>Lorenzo: Okay, Daddy. Me not say it again.

> Lucky nodded and hit the boy's butt lightly.

>Lucky: Now run downstairs and eat your breakfast.

> The boy nodded and ran downstairs. Lucky stood up and went back into
their room. Liz was just finishing getting ready. Lucky stood behind her,

>wrapping his arms around her waist.

>Lucky: I wish I could stay home with you today on your day off.

> Elizabeth turned around in his arms and placed a kiss on his lips.

>Liz So do I...I don't often get a day off from the museum.

> Lucky nodded. Elizabeth worked as the manager of an upscale art
museum. She still painted and had gained quite a bit of fame from selling

>her artwork...She'd also made a pretty penny.

>Lucky: I really wish I could, but you know how V is. She can be a
slavedriver. I have to finish this track for my new CD.

>
 Elizabeth smiled and kissed him again. She was so proud of him. Ten

>years ago when they were eighteen, Elizabeth finally convinced Lucky to share
his talent with the world. After Lucky finally agreed, he realized that he

>loved doing it. L&B records immediately picked him up and gave him a
contract. Within a year, Lucky's first CD was selling like hotcakes around

>the country. He quickly became famous and wealthy. V begged him to
tour
around the country, but Lucky refused. He played local dates
or concerts that
>would require that he only be away a few days at a time. He couldn't
bear
to leave Elizabeth for any longer. When they were twenty
years old, they
>married and bought the beautiful house they still lived in. Now,
eight years
later, they were happier than ever, having created
the family they had dreamt
>of...Life was definitely good for the Spencers.

> Lucky and Elizabeth separated and walked downstairs into their

kitchen. Elizabeth went into the cupboard and took out a box of
cereal.
>Lucky walked over to his daughter and placed a kiss on the top of
her head.

>Lucky: Good morning, sweetie.

> Lexi smiled up adoringly at her father. The term "Daddy's Girl"

seemed as if it had been created solely for her.
>
Lexi: Mornin', Daddy.
>
 Elizabeth placed bowls in front of both her children and poured
them
>some milk. Lucky watched Lorenzo pick up his Matchbox car and
attempt to
place it in the milk. Lucky laughed, catching his
wrist before he had the
>chance.

>Lucky: Lorenzo, toys don't belong in our milk.

> Lorenzo smiled, showing his little teeth.

>Lorenzo: I wanted to see if it would float.

> Lexi snickered and shook her head.

>Lexi: Cars don't float in milk, stupid.

> Lucky turned to his daughter and spoke in a warning tone.

>Lucky: Lexi, we do not speak like that in this house. We don't call
people
names. Now say your sorry to your brother.
>
 Lexi rolled her eyes and muttered...
>
Lexi: I'm sorry...but not really.
>
 Lucky shook his head.
>
Lucky: Lexi.
>
 Lexi huffed and responded.
>
Lexi: Sorry, Lorenzo.
>
 Lorenzo smiled and stuck his tongue out at her. Lexi returned
the
>gesture, their father not noticing the silent actions. Elizabeth
came over
to them with orange juice. She poured Lorenzo some and
then stopped at Lexi.
>
Liz: Honey, do you want orange or apple juice?
>
 Lexi turned away from her mother and her jaw tightened. Lucky
raised
>his brow at Liz.

>Lucky: What's that about?

> Liz shrugged.

>Liz: Lexi's mad at me today.

>Lucky: And why is that?

> Elizabeth smiled.

>Liz: It's Thursday.

> Lucky nodded in understanding.

>Lucky: Oh...Gym day.

> Elizabeth nodded and grinned. Lexi was a very stubborn child, a
trait
she got from both of her parents. But she was also very
quiet at times,

>especially around strangers. She had a wonderful spirit though and Elizabeth
could already see a talent for art in her.

>
 Liz poured her the orange juice. Then the family sat down to eat and

>Lucky quickly finished. He stood up and leaned down to kiss Elizabeth.

>Lucky: See you tonight, baby.

> Elizabeth smiled and said the same thing. Then Lucky placed kisses on
both of his children's heads and said...

>
Lucky: You two be good today...I love you.

>
 Lexi and Lorenzo smiled and yelled in unison.

>
Lexi&Lorenzo: We will...and we love you, too!

>
 Lucky grinned and looked at Elizabeth. He whispered...

>
Lucky: I love you, too.

>
 Elizabeth smiled and waved at him, mouthing the same sentiment. Once

>Lucky had left, Elizabeth clapped her hands together.

>Liz: Okay, your buses are going to be here any minute, so finish eating.

> They both nodded and Elizabeth went to the counters to prepare their
lunches. They finished eating and they both stood up, ready to run for the

>door, as they heard their buses pull up. Elizabeth's voice stopped them.

>Liz: Your lunches!...And take your jackets...it could get chilly.

> They both nodded, grabbed their jackets and their lunches. Elizabeth
bent down to her children and kissed their cheeks, hugging them to her.

>
Liz: You be good today, okay. Lexi, try your best in gym...and Lorenzo,

>please don't stick glue up your nose again like yesterday or up your
teacher's like on Monday.

>
 Lorenzo giggled and nodded, while Lexi only nodded slightly.

>
Liz: I love you, too....Have fun and be careful.

>
 Four little arms wrapped around her neck, whispering "I love you,

>toos" in her ear. Elizabeth smiled and let her arms fall away from them.
They ran outside to their buses and Elizabeth stood at the door, waving at

>them. They turned back, smiled and waved before disappearing onto the bus.
Elizabeth watched the bus vanish and she felt a little empty. She always did

>when she was left alone and without her kids. She worried about them
constantly and preferred it when she or Lucky could keep an eye on them. She

>grabbed her purse and headed out the door to run errands.

>::::::::::

> Elizabeth returned hours later, checking her watch. The kids would
be home any minute now. She walked into the kitchen and helped herself to a

>snack. She smiled as she heard the unmistakable sounds of a bus pulling up
to the house. She went to the door and opened it up. It was Lorenzo's bus.

>She watched his blue eyes dance as he ran up the steps towards her. She
knelt down and he ran right into her arms.

>
Lorenzo: Hi, Mommy!
>
 Elizabeth smiled and pulled back to look at her son. His sandy blonde
>hair was falling across his forehead and he looked absolutely
adorable.

>Liz: Hi, honey!

> Lorenzo wiggled out of her arms and held a piece of paper up to
her.

>Lorenzo: Look what me made in school!

> Elizabeth took the picture and smiled while surveying it.

>Liz: It's beautiful, Lorenzo!

> He smiled proudly and placed his little finger on the paper,
pointing.

>Lorenzo: See, that's you, and Daddy and me and Lexi...That's my
family.

> Elizabeth hugged the boy to her side and smiled. She looked at the

very rough stick figures that represented them. Their heads were
very big
>and their body's small. Not to mention the rainbow of colors that
was used
for their hair.
>
Liz: It looks just like us! Great job, honey....Why don't you go
in the
>kitchen and get yourself a snack while I wait for Lexi.

> Lorenzo nodded and obeyed. Elizabeth stood up and smiled as Lexi's

bus immediately appeared. She waited a few minutes, but Lexi
didn't appear.
>Elizabeth began to worry slightly, wondering what was the
matter...Where was
Lexi?
>
 Elizabeth was about to open the door, when Lexi got off of the
bus.
>She smiled and breathed a sigh of relief. Lexi reached the door and
frowned
at her mother.
>
Lexi: I scraped my knee during gym...It's all your fault.

>
 Elizabeth's eyes widened, as Lexi brushed passed her. Elizabeth

>turned around and placed her hand on her shoulder, stopping her.
Lexi turned
to her and Elizabeth knelt down, lifting her shorts
to see the scrape.
>
Liz: The nurse cleaned it up...It looks okay.
>
 Lexi shook her head.
>
Lexi: It hurt! If you didn't make me go today then I wouldn't
have gotten
>hurt it!

> Elizabeth raised her hand to speak, but Lexi turned around and

stomped away. Elizabeth sighed, knowing that she should give her
some space
>when she got like this. She smiled as Lorenzo reappeared. He opened
his
mouth to show her an orange-filled smile. It seems he'd found
the cut up
>slices she'd left in the refrigerator. Elizabeth laughed and smiled
at him.

>Liz: My, don't you have the most beautiful smile!

> Lorenzo nodded and spoke.

>Lorenzo: Daddy say me and Lexi have your smile.

> Elizabeth grinned and nodded.

>Liz: That's right and you each have your Daddy's pretty blue
eyes.

> Lorenzo nodded happily and patted his mother's hair.

>::::::::::

> One hour later, Lexi was still sulking, constantly complaining that

she now had a permanent limp, while Lorenzo was running wildly
around the

>house. Elizabeth shook her head, knowing that they could be quite
handful
when they wanted to be. She wanted just a few minutes of
peace and quiet.

>She walked over to them.

>Liz: Do you guys want to go play outside for a little while?

> Lorenzo jumped up immediately, but Lexi shook her head.

>Lexi: I don't feel like it.

> Liz sighed and looked down at her daughter.

>Liz: Lexi, just go outside and play with Lorenzo for a little while.
It's not
good to stay inside all of the time.

>
 Lexi stood up and looked defiantly at her mother.

>
Lexi: You always make me do things that I don't want to do!

>
 Elizabeth stood up and watched her daughter leave. She yelled
after

>her.

>Liz: And when you get back in here we'll talk about that bad
attitude!

> Elizabeth shook her head. For a six year old, Lexi was way beyond

her years. She was smart as a whip and stubborn as a goat.

>
 Elizabeth walked over to the sink and opened the window. She
watched

>as Lexi and Lorenzo threw the ball back and forth. She yelled out to
them.

>Liz: You two stay where I can see you, okay?

> They both nodded, not looking at her. Elizabeth watched them as she

did the dishes. Ten minutes later, the phone rang. Elizabeth
turned away

>from the window and answered the phone.

>Liz: Spencer residence.

>Laura: Hi, Liz. How are you?

> Elizabeth smiled at her mother-in-law's voice.

>Liz: I'm fine, Laura. How are you?

>Laura: Just fine. I'm calling to make sure that you're all still
coming over
for dinner tonight.

>
 Elizabeth nodded and walked back over to the window she'd left
only a

>minute before.

>Liz: Yes, we are.

> Elizabeth surveyed the backyard, suddenly deaf to Laura's words.
She
looked from one side of the yard to the other, her brow
furling. She saw

>Lorenzo's little body poking out of the bushes on the left side of
the yard,
but she didn't see Lexi. Her heart jumped a little bit,
while her mind

>ordered her to remain clam. She spoke abruptly into the phone.

>Liz: Laura, I'm sorry, I have to run. The kids need me.

> Elizabeth didn't wait for her to respond before she slammed the
phone
down on the receiver. She walked to the door and opened it
up. She entered

>the yard and looked around it, placing her hand above her eyes to
block out
the sun....Still no Lexi. Elizabeth took a deep breath

and walked over to

>Lorenzo. He turned around, holding the ball and smiled at her.

Elizabeth
knelt down and spoke softly, but clearly to him.

>
Liz: Lorenzo, where's Lexi?....Where did Lexi go, honey?...Can you tell,

>Mommy?

> Lorenzo raised his small shoulders and shrugged, causing Elizabeth's
heart to drop into her stomach. His little voice answered quietly.

>
Lorenzo: Me not know...Me went to get the ball out of the bushes...and now

>Lexi gone.

> Elizabeth nodded and stood up, grabbing onto Lorenzo's hand tightly.
She kept telling herself that Lexi was nearby...That she was hiding to spite

>her...She was lying to herself...her heart knew the truth.

> She walked around the yard, holding Lorenzo's hand so tightly that he
whimpered...

>
Lorenzo: Mommy, you hurting my hand.

>
 Elizabeth barely heard him and only held on tighter. She searched

>for her voice and found it.

>Liz: Lexi!! Come on, sweetie! Stop hiding! You're scaring, Mommy, honey!
Please come out!

>
 Elizabeth's voice grew with desperation following each syllable.

>Lorenzo looked up at his mother, fear entering his eyes. Elizabeth walked to
the front of the yard, on the sides and up and down the street, yelling the

>same thing...But Lexi was still no where to be found. Elizabeth could feel
the tears beginning to build but she knew she had to remain calm. She blinked

>them back, not realizing that many were already falling. Elizabeth came back
to their front yard and stood in the middle of it. She was suddenly feeling

>dizzy and she didn't know what to do next. She looked down at Lorenzo, who
was speaking.

>
Lorenzo: Mommy, why are you crying?...Where's Lexi?

>
 Elizabeth let out a small cry and fell to her knees, pulling Lorenzo

>to her. The full impact had hit her at that moment and all she could say
through her tears was...

>
Liz: I don't know!...Oh God!...I don't know!

>
 Elizabeth kept crying, as her little boy comfortingly patted her

>hair...But the silence surrounded them and the emptiness threatened to
swallow them alive...As they both finally realized that Lexi was gone. . .without a trace.

>

>. . . . Chapter 2. . . .

>
 Elizabeth felt like she was drowning...Like something was holding her

>down in water, preventing her from coming to the top...Stopping her from
breathing. She couldn't think, she couldn't speak, she couldn't move, she

>couldn't hear. She was frozen in her nightmare. Every mother's worse
nightmare. And all that was running through her head at that moment was

>"Where's Lexi?"...And then the question's heartbreaking answer..."I

don't
know."

>
 Elizabeth wrapped her arms tighter around Lorenzo's tiny frame. She

>shook her head and cleared it just a bit. She could hear Lorenzo's voice
saying over and over again the same question that was all her mind was

>occupied with. She managed to look up into his eyes and saw the tears that
were threatening to break through. She could hear his voice begin to choke

>with emotion. He was so little, but he knew that something was
wrong...terribly wrong.

>
 Elizabeth shook her head again, she needed to gain control over

>herself. It was the only chance that Lexi would have right now. She removed
a hand from Lorenzo and furiously wiped at some tears. Then she tried to

>stand, but only succeeded in falling to the ground. She hit the grass with
her fist, angrily yelling...

>
Liz: No!...No, this can't be happening!...No!...Lexi!...Oh God!...My baby!

>
 Lorenzo stood over his mother, his lower lip trembling with fear. He

>knelt down to her and placed his hand on her cheek. He could feel his tears
trying to emerge, but he fought them. His mommy needed him to be strong. He

>whispered to her...

>Lorenzo: Mommy, please get up...We need to find Lexi...Please get up.

> Elizabeth heard her little boy's plead. He needed her and she had to
be there for him...She had to do something. She slowly sat up and then

>managed to pull herself up to her feet. She wiped her hand across her cheek
and underneath her nose. Then she grabbed Lorenzo's hand and looked down at

>him. She tried to speak as strongly as she could.

>Liz: Honey, it...it's okay...We're going to find Lexi...I promise...Don't
be...sc...scared.

>
 Lorenzo nodded and squeezed his mother's hand. Elizabeth walked up

>the stairs of her house and entered the front door. She needed to call the
police...She was finally thinking clearly. Then she would call Lucky...or at

>least she would try. Elizabeth went into the kitchen and picked up the
phone. She held onto Lorenzo's hand with her other one and her eyes focused

>on the phone in her hand. She couldn't lift her hand to her ear, her eyes
seemed to be glazing over as she stared at the phone. She remembered how

>just a few minutes ago, she'd been holding this phone. Then her life had
been turned upside down...in one minute...one fateful minute..it had all

>changed. She stared at the phone, contempt for it sketched across her face.
If only it hadn't rung...She let out a cry and slammed the phone against the

>wall.

>Liz: Damn phone!...This is all your fault!...Why did you ring?!...Why did you
have to ring?!...Why did I have to answer you?!

>
 Lorenzo reacted with a start and tried to pull free of his mother,

>but she held on too tight...She couldn't lose him, too. She kept slamming
the phone against the wall, until it cracked and a piece broke off. Her
>mouth hung open and she let the phone drop to the floor. She reached a hand
out to the counter, steadying herself. She shook her head again...She needed
>to do this...She needed to get help for her daughter...Time was of the
essence.
>
 She slowly straightened, taking a deep breath. She walked out of the
>kitchen, Lorenzo's hand securely in her own. She walked into Lucky's office
and sat down at the desk, pulling Lorenzo onto her lap. She wouldn't let him
>out of her sight...She couldn't. She took another deep breath and with
trembling fingers picked up the phone. She held it up to her ear and guided
>her fingers to the numbers: 9-1-1. Elizabeth listened to the phone ring once
and it seemed like an eternity. Someone answered right after the first ring.
>
911: 911, what is your emergency?
>
 Elizabeth let out a breath of air as she prepared to tell her

>emergency.

>Liz: It's my daughter...She's missing...I..I can't find her.

> The tears that had never fully stopped began to flow again. The 911
operator spoke again.
>
911: Ma'am, how long has she been missing?
>
 Elizabeth ran a hand through her hair, trying to think of how long it
>had been. It seemed like hours, but it couldn't have been more than ten or
fifteen minutes.
>
Liz: I...I don't know...ten or fifteen minutes I think.
>
 Elizabeth heard the operator sigh. She always hated this part the
>most...it just wasn't right.

>911: I am sorry ma'am, but we cannot do anything until she has been missing
for twenty-four hours....I really am sorry.
>
 Elizabeth felt like she'd been punched in the stomach. 911 couldn't
>be telling her this..They couldn't be telling her that her child...her baby
didn't matter until she was missing for twenty-four agonizing hours...Until
>maybe it was too late.

> Elizabeth shook her head and yelled into the phone, unable to curb
her emotions.
>
Liz: What the hell am I supposed to do for twenty-four damn hours?!..She's
>my daughter...My six year old baby girl!..And...and I don't know where she
is!...Do..do you understand that?!...Do you?!...I need the police, damn
>it!...What the hell are they good for if they can't find my daughter?!

> The woman shook her head on the other side of the phone, there was
nothing she could do. These were the rules and they made her feel so
>helpless. She was a mother, too...And she couldn't imagine the pain this
woman was feeling...But it didn't matter how she felt...It only mattered what
>she could do. She cautiously spoke...

>911: Ma'am, I'm sorry, but there is nothing I can do. These are the

rules.
Many times children are hiding and they show up twenty minutes later or so.

>This is designed to prevent false alarms.

> The woman hated herself for having to spout such crap. She wouldn't
have wanted to hear it if it had been her child. Elizabeth lowered her head

>and then raised it again. She spoke tersely and determined into the phone...

>Liz: This is not one of those times. I know my daughter. But if you can't
help me then I'll find someone who can. Please transfer my call to

>Commissioner Scorpio's office.

>911: Ma'am I can't-

>Liz: Just do it!...Please just do this for me...Please.

> The woman nodded, feeling as if she owed her this much. She
transferred the call and Elizabeth listened as Mac picked up.

>
Mac: Scorpio.

>
 Elizabeth began, her words trailing out her mouth in a blur.

>
Liz: Mac, it's Elizabeth Spencer. Lexi's missing. She...she was in the

>backyard playing and..and then I answered the phone and she was gone...I..I
looked all over for her...but she's not here....She's gone...Mac, please help

>me.

> Mac took a deep breath. He and Felicia had grown close to the
Spencer family because of Felicia's connection with Luke. He liked

>Lexi..."She is an adorable child", he thought. Mac knew all about the time
specifications, but he didn't give a damn. This could have been Maxie or

>Georgie....It had been Maxie. Mac remembered when she'd been kidnapped by
Ryan...If he could do something to help get Lexi back, then he sure as hell

>wasn't going to let some damn rules stop him. He spoke quickly into the
phone.

>
Mac: Okay, sit tight, Liz. My men and I will be there right away.

>
 Elizabeth breathed a sigh of relief into the phone.

>
Liz: Thank you!

>
 With that, they both hung up. Mac went to gather Taggart and a few

>other detectives. Elizabeth hugged Lorenzo to her. She looked back at the
phone...she had to call Lucky...But she couldn't bring herself to do it. How

>could she tell him that Lexi was missing?....How could she tell him that
Elizabeth had lost her?...How could she tell him something like this?...It

>would break his heart...Elizabeth stared at the phone, trying to gain the
courage to do one of the hardest things she'd ever have to do. She stared at

>it for ten minutes, never gathering the courage needed. Then she heard the
doorbell ring. She jumped with a start...and could only think of Lexi.

>Maybe someone had found her, maybe she just got lost....Maybe it was Lexi.
Elizabeth quickly placed Lorenzo on the floor and stood up, taking his hand

>in hers. She was so hopeful that it was Lexi...She didn't stop to think of
the improbability of it. She walked quickly to the door

and flung it open,
>saying as she did so...

>Liz: Lexi?!..Lexi?!

> Elizabeth's face immediately fell, as her eyes landed on Mac,
Taggart
and two other detectives...not Lexi. Mac lowered his head
and then looked
>back up into her despair filled eyes.

>Mac: Liz, could we come in?

> Elizabeth silently moved aside and allowed them to come in. It was

like she'd lost Lexi again in that moment...She'd been so sure.
Elizabeth
>lead them into her living room and sat down on the couch, placing
Lorenzo on
her lap. Mac spoke first.
>
Mac: Have you called Lucky yet?
>
 Elizabeth shook her head.
>
Liz: I couldn't.
>
 Mac nodded and motioned to Taggart.
>
Mac: Taggart can do it.
>
 Elizabeth shook her head back and forth emphatically.

>
Liz: No...no, he needs to hear this from me...I'll be able to do
it.
>
 Mac nodded.
>
Mac: Okay, but let's get some information first so that we can
start looking
>for Lexi as soon as possible. We don't want to waste any time.

> Elizabeth nodded. Mac also nodded and leaned closer to her.

>Mac: Now, the best you can, tell us what happened.

> Elizabeth bit her lip and breathed in deeply.

>Liz: I...I told the kids to go outside and play because I...I needed
to do
some things.
>
 Elizabeth closed her eyes at that, guilt beginning to overtake
her.
>The guilt would become something that would haunt her, almost to the
point of
consuming her. She opened her eyes and began again.

>
Liz: And Lexi didn't want to go...but I...I made her..She was so
mad at me.
>
 Elizabeth could feel the tears falling, as she remembered her
last
>time with her daughter...What she wouldn't give to hold her in her
arms right
then and never let her go...But she couldn't do it and
she regretted how her
>last moments with Lexi had been spent.

>Liz: So they went outside and were playing with the ball, while I
washed the
dishes at the kitchen sink. I..I watched them the
whole time and told them
>to stay where I could see them. About ten minutes went by and then
the...the
phone rang.
>
 Elizabeth looked away from them, the ringing beginning to feel
her
>ears and the moment replaying itself in her mind in slow motion. She
shook
herself free of those thoughts and looked back at them.

>
Liz: It was Laura...I turned away for just a minute to pick up
the phone and
>I said a few words to Laura. It was just a minute, but when I went
back to
the window, I didn't see Lexi. So I..I hung up the phone

and went outside.

>I saw Lorenzo, he was getting the ball out of the bushes. I asked him if he
knew where Lexi was. He said he went to get the ball and now she was...was

>gone. So I yelled for her and searched the back, sides, and front yard. Then
I walked up and down the street yelling and looking for her..but I

>couldn't....I couldn't find her.

> Elizabeth concluded with a whimper and placed her hand to her mouth.
Mac placed a comforting hand to her shoulder. He spoke quietly.

>
Liz: Did you see or hear anything unusual at any point, Liz?

>
 Elizabeth searched her mind. She couldn't think of anything. A

>little while ago, that day had been like any other...just an ordinary day.
She shook her head.

>
Liz: No...No, I don't think so.

>
 Mac looked at Lorenzo, who was staring at him with wide eyes. Mac

>smiled at him.

>Mac: Lorenzo, did you hear anything that was weird or see anything that was
weird?

>
 Lorenzo's little eyebrows peaked, as he thought. Then he shook his

>head.

>Lorenzo: No

> Mac nodded.

>Mac: Thank you, Lorenzo.

> Lorenzo nodded and smiled warmly at Mac. Mac turned to Liz again.

>Mac: What was she wearing, Liz?

> Elizabeth stared at him blankly. She couldn't remember. How could
she not remember? She bit her lip, desperately searching her distressed

>mind. She sighed in relief, as an image of her daughter in her mind's eye
appeared.

>
Liz: She was wearing a pink short sleeve shirt with lavender trim on the

>sleeves. And..and lavender jean short overalls. She had pink socks on and
white Barbie sneakers...She...she loves Barbie.

>
 Mac nodded, taking notes.

>
Mac: Okay, now can you tell us any place she could be? Like favorite hiding

>places or places she just likes. We check them to make sure we don't miss
anything.

>
 Elizabeth nodded and raised a shaking hand to her forehead.

>
Liz: Uh...She likes going to the park...and...No..no that's the only place

>close enough.

> Mac nodded and then looked back at her.

>Mac: Now all we need is a recent picture of Lexi to distribute.

> Elizabeth nodded and slowly lifted herself off the couch, placing
Lorenzo on the floor. She walked over to a bookcase on the opposite wall and

>pulled out a photo album. She leafed through it, stopping at a page towards
the back. She sniffed as she looked at the picture. She stuck her hand in

>beneath the plastic and pulled it out. She walked over to Mac and handed him
the photo.

>
Liz: This was taken a few weeks ago, at the end of April. We went to Disney World on her spring vacation.

> Mac looked at the picture, as Elizabeth looked on. Lexi was standing
next to a woman dressed as Cinderella. She was smiling widely and her blonde hair shone from the sun's rays. You could see that her eyes were twinkling
with excitement and happiness...She looked beautiful. Elizabeth tore her eyes away from the picture, it being too much to bear. She said softly.

>Liz: She was so happy that day.

> Mac looked at Elizabeth and his heart broke a little. He handed
Taggart the photo and turned to him.

>
Mac: Okay, Taggart, get some more men out here to comb the area and look for any evidence that could lead us to her location or the identity of the
perpetrator. Put an APB out on Lexi Spencer with her description. Waters,

>Kendall you go door to door with the picture. Ask them if they've seen her
recently, heard or seen anything strange or out of the ordinary. Okay, move.

>
The men dispersed and Mac turned to Liz.

>
Mac: We're going to find her, Liz..I promise. We'll bring her home safe and

>sound.

> Elizabeth nodded, the words bringing her no comfort and not easing
her mind in the least. Mac touched her arm gently.

>
Mac: Liz, you need to call Lucky. He needs to know and you both need each other right now. I have to go, but my men and I will be back soon to make
other preparations. Stay strong, Liz.

>
 Elizabeth nodded and thanked him. She watched him leave and then she sank down into the couch, once again pulling Lorenzo into her lap. She
closed her eyes and kissed him on top of his head, his soft hair tickling her lips...And all she could think of was Lucky needs to know...She had to call
him...But how was she supposed to tell him that their daughter was gone?

>
 Elizabeth pushed some hair behind her ears, inhaling and then exhaling softly. She reached for the phone on the table beside her. Her
hand picked the phone up and slowly moved it to her ear. With the other hand

>she reached over and dialed Lucky's cell phone number...And she listened to
the sound that would forever make her heart drop into her stomach.

>
 Lucky heard his cell phone ringing on the table across from him. He

>in the pit of his stomach immediately felt that something was wrong. He'd been having a strange feeling in the pit of his stomach for the last hour, but had tried to ignore it...Now
he could no longer, knowing that when he picked up the phone his fears would be confirmed. He slowly walked over to the phone and turned it on. His
voice spoke cautiously.

>
Lucky: Lucky Spencer.

>
 Elizabeth bit her lip, at hearing his voice and prepared to

Speak.

>
Liz: Lucky.

>
 Lucky heard the anguish in Liz's voice in just that one word. He

>closed his eyes and then spoke into the phone.

>Lucky: Elizabeth. Baby, what happened?

> Elizabeth wiped at a tear on her cheek. Her voice began, wracked with
emotion.

>
Liz: It's Lexi...She disappeared...Lucky, she's gone...I...I can't find her.

>
 Lucky felt his legs weaken beneath him and he had to put his hand on

>the table to stop him from falling. He felt as if he'd been hit by a bus.
His heart dropped and his stomach churned. He gathered himself enough to

>say...

>Lucky: Okay, Elizabeth, hold on. I'll be right there. Did you call the police
yet?

>
Liz: Yes, they've already started searching.

>
 Lucky nodded, blinking back tears. He ran a hand through his hair

>and spoke.

>Lucky: I'm on my way.

> Lucky turned the phone off and ran out of the studio. He watched V's
eyes follow after him and yell at him, wondering what was wrong, but he

>didn't answer. He was outside and into his car before her last words had
trailed out of her mouth. Lucky started up the car and began to drive.

>His mind was a blur and he barely obeyed the traffic rules. His tears were
now falling freely down his face and his mind was being assaulted with images

>of his little girl. He spoke to himself...

>Lucky: Oh God...Please let my little girl be okay...Please let us find
her...Keep her safe...Please keep her safe.

>
:::~::~

>
 Lucky finally reached his house and ran inside. He saw Elizabeth

>sitting on the couch and she stood up when he entered. Lucky ran over to her
and pulled her into his arms. Elizabeth began to cry hysterically into his

>shoulder, mumbling repeatedly...

>Liz: I'm so sorry, Lucky...I'm so sorry...This...this is all my fault.

> Lucky let go of Elizabeth and pulled back, placing both hands on the
side of her face. He looked into her eyes and spoke...

>
Lucky: No..Elizabeth, this isn't your fault....Now tell me what happened if

>you can.

> Elizabeth and Lucky walked over to the couch, Lorenzo hugging onto
his father's arm. Elizabeth wiped at her tears and began slowly.

>
Liz: I told them to go outside and play because...because they were being

>loud and I needed some quiet time. Lexi didn't want to go, but I...I forced
her. I was watching them through the window and then...then the phone rang.

>It was your mother and I turned around to answer the phone and I was talking
for just a minute...one minute, Lucky!...And when I

looked back she was
>gone...Lorenzo was getting the ball out of the bushes and Lexi was...was...

> Elizabeth shook her head and fell into Lucky's chest. Lucky patted
her hair, as he took it all in. He couldn't believe it was happening. He'd
>seen her only hours earlier and now she was gone...and there wasn't a damn
thing he could do.
>
Lucky: We'll find her. The police will find her. She's strong, Elizabeth.
>She's a Spencer...and she's a fighter.

> Elizabeth placed her hands on Lucky's chest and pushed back, shaking
her head. Her eyes were filled to the brim with tears, many already falling.
>Her voice rose and her anguish spoke through it.

>Liz: She shouldn't have to fight, Lucky!...I did this!...Don't you
see?!...She's my daughter...my baby...I'm her mother...I'm supposed to
>protect her, I'm supposed to keep her safe! But I...I couldn't do that...I
couldn't!
>
 Lucky shook his head, knowing that Elizabeth was bearing a burden she
>didn't deserve.

>Lucky: Elizabeth, no. It's not-

> Elizabeth shook her head, her eyes roaming wildly.

>Liz: Stop it!...Lucky, stop! ...It is my fault! She was angry at me because
she got hurt in gym and then I forced her to go outside! She didn't want to
>go, I made her do it! I sent my child out of the safety of this house and
made her vulnerable to some sick bastard!...I did it, Lucky!...No matter how
>you look at this, it was all my fault!...I am to blame! She is a defenseless
little girl...and I didn't do anything to make sure she was protected!...I am
>to blame!...Me!

> Elizabeth's arms were flailing and her head was shaking back and
forth. Lorenzo had hidden behind his father's back, covering his ears. No
>one had thought to bring him somewhere so that he wouldn't have to see all of
this. And Lucky and Elizabeth were too consumed with dealing with all of
>their feelings to pay him any attention right then. Lucky shook his head,
his eyes red with tears. He grabbed onto Elizabeth's wrist and pulled her to
>him, wrapping his arms around her. He spoke soothingly, trying to stay calm.

>Lucky: Elizabeth, don't do this to yourself. It won't help us bring back
Lexi and it will only cause us all more pain. This could have happened to
>the best of parents..you looked away for one minute. She...she was playing
in her backyard...a place where any kid should feel safe and secure. It was
>broad daylight...These things are supposed to happen in people's
backyards...in the middle of the day...It's...it's not supposed to happen.
>
 Lucky ran a hand down his face, as Elizabeth listened to his words.
>He was right, but she was too much in pain to agree. She sat straight up and
looked at him.
>
Liz: She was mad at me Lucky. She was so mad at me. I...I can't

believe the

>last moments we spent together, she was angry at me. And...and I was angry
with her because of her attitude. The last thing I said to her...just her...I

>yelled. God, what if she thinks I am still mad?....What if she doesn't think
I love her anymore?

>
 Lucky shook his head, touching her cheek softly.

>
Lucky: She knows, Elizabeth. You showed her and told her everyday. She

>knows how much you love her, she knows how much we all love her. It will keep
her strong. And when we get her back home with us, we'll show her how much we

>missed her and show her how much we love her for the rest of her life.

> Lucky closed his eyes, praying they would get that chance.

>Liz: She must be so scared...She's always quiet around strangers...She must
be so frightened.

>
 Lucky squeezed Elizabeth's hand and looked into her eyes.

>
Lucky: God will keep her safe, baby...He will.

>
 Elizabeth nodded and Lucky wrapped his arm around her shoulder. They

>sat there with Lorenzo sitting at their feet, praying for a miracle...a
miracle they knew they would need.

>
:::~::~

>
 Fifteen minutes later, the police were back. Mac said they'd update

>them on anything they found out as soon as they set up a work station to tap
into and trace any calls they might receive. Lucky and Elizabeth were

>sitting in shock on the couch in their living room, when they heard noise at
their front door.

>
Luke: Let me the hell in! This is my son's house and I'll be damned if you

>keep me out of it!

> Lucky immediately jumped up, at hearing his father's voice. With all
that had been going on, he'd forgotten to call his parents. He walked over

>to the door where an officer stood. He could see Luke and Laura's heads
through the space in between the door and its frame.

>
Lucky: It's okay..They're my parents. Please let them in.

>
 The officer moved aside and let Luke and Laura in. Laura enveloped

>Lucky in a hug.

>Laura: Oh baby, I'm so sorry.

> Luke did the same.

>Luke: Cowboy, you stay strong. We're going to find Lexi.

> Lucky nodded and thanked them. He could tell that they were trying to
stay strong for him. He could see his mother's reddened eyes and noticed his

>father's were glassy from tears held back.

>Lucky: How did you find out?

>Laura: Well, I got a bad feeling when Liz hung up so abruptly, but after I
didn't hear anything right away, so I tried to forget about it...But I

>couldn't. I knew something was horribly wrong. I called back here and Mac
answered. He told me what happened. So I got your father

and we came right

>over. Lulu is on a school trip to D.C. till tomorrow so we decided to wait
and tell her till then. Hopefully, Lexi will be back by then.

>
 Lucky nodded, hoping the same thing. He and Elizabeth hadn't even

>heard the phone ring when his mother had called, they'd been so preoccupied.
Lorenzo came running into the foyer and ran right into his grandfather's arms.

>
Lorenzo: Grandpa!

>
 Luke smiled best he could and spoke to his grandson.

>
Luke: Cowboy, Jr! You get more handsome everyday!

>
 Luke had to blink back his tears while he looked at Lorenzo. He and

>Lexi looked so much alike. Lorenzo smiled at his grandmother.

>Lorenzo: Hi, Grandma.

> Laura smiled and ran her hand through his hair.

>Laura: Hi, baby.

> Luke placed Lorenzo down on the ground and Laura took his hand. They
went back into the living room to be with Liz. Luke looked at Lucky and then

>at Mac.

>Mac: Well, Bubba, do you have any leads as to where my granddaughter might be?

> Mac motioned to Luke and Lucky to follow him and his men into the
kitchen. Luke and Lucky sat down at the kitchen table, while Mac, Taggart,

>Waters and Kendall all stood before them.

>Mac: We have an APB out on Lexi, but so far nothing has come from that. My
men searched your yard and the surrounding area. We didn't find anything. No

>footsteps other than a few made by Lexi and Lorenzo in the backyard on some
dirt patches. No fabric, nothing anywhere. My men went door to door, but no

>one could tell us anything. It was during the day so many people were not
home. And those that were, didn't notice anything out of the ordinary. So

>now we wait. She's been missing close to five hours and all we can do is
wait.

>
 Lucky ran a hand through his hair and then slammed it down on the

>tile of the table.

>Lucky: That's not good enough! If we wait, then we'll never find her! It's
going to be too late!...She's my daughter, I can't sit here and wait for

>someone to tell me that she's never coming home!

> Taggart cleared his throat and looked down at Lucky. His heart ached
for him and Elizabeth, they had survived so much.

>
Taggart: Lucky, I know this is hard, but there's nothing more we can do right

>now. We have men out looking for her and we're ready in case we get a ransom
call.

>
 Luke patted his son's hand. Detective Waters watched them. He was

>newly promoted to Detective, a rookie in many ways. He was very nervous,
this was his first kidnapping case. But there was something that hadn't been

>asked yet. He cleared his voice and spoke quietly.

>Waters: Is there anyone that you can think of that could have wanted to take
Lexi? Does your family have any enemies?
>
 Luke looked up at Waters and almost chuckled.
>
Luke: Does a Cassadine have fangs?
>
 Waters looked at him perplexed, he was also new in town and had no
>idea about the history of the Spencers.

>Waters: Excuse me?

> Luke shook his head, he knew he was going to be using his humor as a
defense mechanism, he always did. It kept him strong...it kept him from
>feeling too much.

>Luke: Detective, my family has more enemies than you have fingers. There are
many people who'd like to harm us, but I do my best to prevent that...That
>doesn't mean I always succeed.

> Lucky closed his eyes. He hadn't thought about who could have
actually done it. The list was long.
>
Waters: Do you care to elaborate?
>
 Luke nodded.
>
Luke: Helena Cassadine, resident witch. She's been screwing with my family
>for longer than I care to count. I wouldn't put this past her, she's done it
before. But this doesn't smell like Helena. She usually puts her signature
>on her dastardly deeds. She revels in you knowing that she's the one
wreaking the havoc. But, like I said, I still wouldn't put it past her.
>
 Waters nodded and furiously took notes. Luke continued.

>
Luke: Moreno, Junior, resident mobster. He's got revenge on his mind after
>Sonny took down his Pop twelve years ago, when he was just a youngster. Sonny
and I are partners and friends, so it's no surprise that my family would be a
>target.

> Waters continued to write, wondering if he'd be needing another pen
soon. Luke went on.
>
Luke: Cesar Faison, resident psycho. Well, actually, we don't know where he
>is. Twelve years ago, he kidnapped my son, with the help of Helena and made
us all believe Lucky had died in a fire. He also killed Robert and Anna
>Scorpio. Lucky escaped from his hell on earth a few months later and we
discovered that Helena and Faison were behind it. Faison disappeared after
>that, he'd be dead if he hadn't. The only reason Helena isn't bumping and
grinding with the devil down where she belongs is because I am waiting for
>the right moment. But, Faison, he could have done this.

> Waters' eyes widened, as Luke alluded to committing murder. Mac,
Taggart and Kendall were unfazed, knowing all about Luke. Luke searched his
>mind for more enemies, when Lucky piped up.

>Lucky: Tom Baker. I guess this could be important, so I'll tell you. They
already know anyway, it was made public. About thirteen years ago, Tom Baker
>raped Elizabeth. He did some time, but was out a few years later. We've
always felt he wanted to seek revenge on us for putting him

away. He stayed

>in town for a few years and then disappeared. Even his parole officer doesn't
know where he is now. He could have done this, too.

>
 They all nodded, as Waters shook his head, wondering how one family

>could have gone through so much...And he didn't even know the half of it.
Taggart piped up just then.

>
Taggart: I am afraid we have even more suspects than that.

>
 Luke and Lucky raised their eyebrows, while Taggart continued.

>
Taggart: You and Elizabeth each have fame. Elizabeth has some fame,

>especially locally from her artwork. And you, Lucky, well you know that
you're known around the country because of your success as a singer. That

>makes you susceptible to all kind of crazies. Some could be after ransom
money and some could just be seeking a thrill. But it's a possibility.

>
 Luke and Lucky nodded, not even thinking of that danger. Mac spoke up.

>
Mac: And it doesn't end there. We still have to consider that it could be any

>stranger walking down the street, any stranger watching the house, any
stranger wanting a kid....And then there's one

more...Friends, family and
acquaintances. It happens.

> Lucky shook his head emphatically.

>Lucky: No..no anyone we know, really know, couldn't be capable of this. It's
not possible.

>
 Mac nodded.

>
Mac: We'd like to think that Lucky, but it has happened before. We have to

>check out everyone so that we don't miss anything. And if it is someone you
know, then maybe she isn't scared, maybe they aren't going to hurt her.

>
 Lucky shook his head, his tears apparent in his eyes.

>
Lucky: Am I supposed to find comfort in that?!...Hmm?....Am I?!

>
 Mac was about to reply, when Lucky pushed the seat out from behind

>him and stormed out of the kitchen. Once he was out of sight, he leaned
against a wall and lowered himself to the floor. He tangled his hands in his

>hair and bent his head, allowing his tears to fall. And he wondered...with
all these suspects...would they ever be able to find Lexi?....Would she ever

>come home to them alive and well?

>
. . . . Chapter 3

>
 Lucky sat in the same position for twenty minutes, allowing all of

>his feelings of fears, anger and helplessness to come out. He finally
pulled himself up off the ground. He lifted his tearstained face up and

>looked at the clock hanging on the wall in front of him. The minute hand was
on the five and the hour hand was on the ten. It was ten o'clock and Lexi

>had now been missing for close to six hours. Lucky shook his head,

unable to
comprehend the fact that she wasn't fine, sleeping soundly upstairs in her
bed. He couldn't believe that he hadn't tucked her in like he did every
night, placing a kiss on her forehead and whispering "dreams of gold" before
he left. He prayed that she was safe...that she was still all right.

> Just then, Lucky's head jerked up as he heard Elizabeth wail. He
hurried into the living room. He looked at his mother who was crying and

>Elizabeth who was shaking her head. Lucky knelt beside her and Elizabeth
looked down into his eyes. He watched her lower lip quiver, as she said...

>
Liz: She's cold...Lucky, Lexi's cold...I know it. She...she needs her

>blanket...She's cold.

> Lucky closed his eyes, her words too heartbreaking. He slowly opened
them up again and raised a hand to her cheek, gently touching it.

>
Lucky: Baby, it's springtime, so it's pretty warm out even at night. I am

>sure Lexi is warm...and...and if she isn't then we have to pray to God that
he will make her warmer.

>
Elizabeth stared at him blankly. They both had a strong belief in

>God, one that had intensified with the coming of their children. When they
were teenagers, they had believed, but it wasn't something that drove them in

>their everyday lives. But when Lexi was born to them, they knew that she
couldn't be anything but a miracle created out of their love and given to

>them by God. But they would soon realize that their faith would be
tested...and that they would have to hold onto it if they were going to

>survive this.

> Elizabeth's head shook back and forth and her eyes grew angry.

>Liz: God?!...God?! Lucky, God took Lexi away from us! He could have
stopped this! What kind of God allows a child to be taken from her

>parents?!...Tell me! Be...be cause I...I don't understand!...He gave her to
us and now he takes her away?...How can I believe in a force that could have
prevented this?!

> Lucky looked straight into her pleading and eyes and searched for
answers...answers to questions that were burdening his own mind and heart at

>that very moment. He knew their faith would have to get them through
this...but he had no idea how hard it would be. He licked his lips and began.

>
Lucky: Elizabeth, it doesn't make sense...These things never do. But it's not

>God who did this. It's the sick person who couldn't control himself. God
will protect her, we have to believe that. But he can't stop a person from

>making horrible choices...He can only hope to guide them so that they don't
make anymore. We have to believe in Him, Elizabeth...We need to for Lexi.

>
 Lucky clasped Elizabeth's hands in his own and tried to ignore his

>own doubting heart. Elizabeth only turned her head away from him and said
softly...
>
Liz: When she's back I'll believe...When she's back.
>
 Lucky bent his head and pushed back some tears. Then he turned

>around at hearing his father's voice.

>Luke: Cowboy, your mother and I are going to get going now.

> Lucky nodded and stood up. Laura walked over to Luke, holding a very
tired Lorenzo. No one had put him to sleep yet. Laura looked at her son, her
>heart breaking in two at the sight he presented.

>Laura: Lucky, we're going to take Lorenzo home with us tonight. You guys need
your rest and he can sleep better this way.
>
 Lucky began to nod, when Elizabeth jumped up off the couch and stood
>next to Lucky.

>Liz: No! No...I can't let him out of my sight. I...I need to know he's here,
with us.
>
 Lucky, Luke and Laura were surprised by Liz's objections. Luke said
>quietly.

>Luke: Darlin', he'll be fine with us...We'll keep him safe.

> Elizabeth nodded, biting her lip.

>Liz: It's not that...I know that...I just need to know he's close by.
Lexi..Lexi's not here, but I..I need Lorenzo right now. I know it doesn't
>make sense...but I just need him.

> Luke and Laura looked at Lucky, who nodded tiredly. They shrugged
and handed Lorenzo to Lucky. He laid his head on his shoulder and wrapped his
>arms around his neck. Luke and Laura said their good-byes and left.

>::::::::::

> Once in the car, Luke turned to Laura, who was busy trying to control
her tears.
>
Luke: I heard what Lucky was spouting about God...What do you think about all
>of that?

> Laura turned to him.

>Laura: I think that they need all they can right now to hold onto. And I hope
that their faith can be one of those things.
>
 Luke shook his head. God was a subject he didn't often touch. He
>didn't believe in things you couldn't see, touch, or prove. He was a man
with faith only in himself and the ones he loved.

>
Luke: I don't know, Laura. Liz made sense. How can God allow something so
>damn horrible like this to happen?!...I am not a religious man, never have
been. But I'd give up cigars...I'd quit cursing...I would give my right
>arm.....I'd lead a saintly life from here on...if I thought it would make a
bit of difference...If I thought it'd make the big guy in the sky bring that
>little girl back to us...But, damnit Laura, I just don't know.

> Laura nodded at Luke, wishing she could say something to comfort him,
but her faith had been shaken to...Tragedies like this always do. They sat
>there in silence, until Luke whispered.

>Luke: No...man does the crimes...and man will make the criminal pay.

> Laura listened to her husband's cold words and studied his stone

still eyes, each of them sending shivers down her spine.

>
:::~::~

>
 Lucky and Elizabeth said good-bye to the detectives, who
promised

>they'd be back bright an early. One officer was left for protection
and in
case of any other happenings pertinent to the case. Lucky
turned the light

>off down stairs and patted the hair of his sleeping son. He and
Elizabeth
then made their way up the stairs. They went into
Lorenzo's room and lay the

>peaceful boy down onto his bed. They both kissed his forehead and
told him
they loved him. And as they left his room, they hoped
that he'd be kept

>safe. They left the door a crack open and then walked down the hall
towards
their room. They both froze as they passed in front of
Lexi's room.

>Elizabeth covered her mouth and Lucky placed an arm across her
shoulders.
They couldn't bear to go in that room right now, only
to find it empty, it's

>bed cold. They day would come when they would seek it out, but for
now their
hearts wouldn't allow it. They continued into their
bedroom, prepared for

>bed and lay down. Sleep didn't come easily or quickly, but they
eventually
drifted off...Too tired to fight it any longer...And
eager to enter a world

>where Lexi was safe and there...with them.

>:::~::~

> Elizabeth awoke several hours later and sat straight up in bed. She

looked over at Lucky's side of the bed and frowned when she
noticed it empty.

>Elizabeth glanced at the clock. It was two o'clock in the morning.
She
gathered the strength to get out of the bed and she quietly
walked

>downstairs. As she neared the family room, she noticed a soft glow
emitting
from it. She could also hear a murmur of noise. She
walked towards the

>room, stopping at the archway at its entrance. The TV was on and she
could
see the back of Lucky who was sitting on the couch in front
of it. Her eyes

>focused on the images on TV and she gasped when she realized what it

was...Their home videos...It had just begun. Elizabeth pushed
back tears and

>came to stand behind Lucky. He lifted his head when he saw her and
Elizabeth
saw his tears ready to flow. She placed an arm over his
shoulder and he

>lifted his hand to grasp hers. And then they watched..They watched
the life
that had been good to them...The watched the memories
unfold that they had

>cherished...And that they now needed more than ever.

>:::~::~

> The tape began, with Elizabeth speaking into the camera. The date
in
the corner of the screen read: 3/06/04....She was beaming as
she whispered

>into its lens...

>Liz: This is the first Spencer Family Home Video...And we're going

to have a
lot to share on it.
>
 They watched as Elizabeth placed the camera on the kitchen counter
>and sat down at the kitchen table. It was adorned with candles and food. She
smiled and waited as Lucky entered. He looked surprised and Elizabeth
>approached him, kissing him lightly.

>Liz: Welcome home.

>Lucky: Good to be home...What's all this about?

> Elizabeth smiled, unable to contain her excitement for one moment
more. She came closer to him and sang softly, changing the song's words to
>suit her....

>Liz: Havin' your baby...What a wonderful way of sayin' how much I love ya...

> Lucky's eyes widened in shock and then a smile spread across his face.

>Lucky: A baby!...Elizabeth, a baby!...We're going to be parents?!

> Elizabeth nodded enthusiastically, smiling from ear to ear. Lucky
quickly took her face in his hands and kissed her. Then he pulled back
>saying...

>Lucky: I've never been happier...We're going to have a child...Someone we
made from our love...Someone we'll always have to love.
>
 Elizabeth nodded and touched his cheek, while a tear rolled down her
>own. She whispered to him...

>Liz: Always.

>~God made the world with towering trees,
Majestic mountains and restless seas.
>Then he paused and said, "It needs one more thing...
Someone to laugh and dance and sing.
>To walk in the woods and gather flowers...
To commune with nature in quiet hours."~
>::::::::::

> Lucky and Elizabeth shook their heads as they watched the memory.
This was so hard for them to watch, but they couldn't stop. They needed to
>feel close to their little girl. They remembered that day more than six years
ago...That was the day all of their dreams began to come true...It was the
>day they began to build their family...and they never would have imagined
that that day would lead to this one.
>
 The tape continued, advancing 8 months. The date now read: 11/10/04.
>Lucky heard Elizabeth whimper quietly as they realized what the day was. The
day Lexi was born. Luke was holding the camera on a nervous Lucky who was
>standing in the hallway. You could hear Luke's voice in the background.

>Luke: Okay, Cowboy, tell us what you are feeling right now.

> Lucky looked weakly into the camera.

>Lucky: I feel like throwing up.

> Luke laughed.

>Luke: Buck up, Lucky. Elizabeth's the one squeezing a cadillac out of a key
hole.
>
 Lucky nodded nervously and then shook his head. They were just

>checking Elizabeth, but he was worried sick. It was the happiest day of his
life and the scariest. An innocent, helpless life would soon depend on him.

>It was a challenge he was more than willing to accept, but it was frightening
all the same. Lucky couldn't stand it anymore so he flung the door open and

>entered. Elizabeth smiled when she saw him and he returned it. He sat down
at her side, as Luke silently followed them in, concealing himself, so he'd

>catch every moment.. Lucky took her hand and patted her hair back.

>Lucky: You're doing great, baby. Just a little while longer and we'll have a
son or a daughter. A miracle, Elizabeth...We'll have our very own little

>miracle.

> Elizabeth smiled and squeezed his hand.

>Liz: I can't wait, Lucky...I just can't wait.

> Elizabeth and Lucky sat there until it was time for Elizabeth to
push. Lucky held her hand and coached her. Elizabeth breathed deeply, as her

>face became soaked with sweat. She kept pushing, but the baby just wasn't
ready. The doctor looked up at them, smiling.

>
Doc: Looks like you've got a stubborn one on your hands.

>
 Elizabeth and Lucky grinned at one another replying in unison...

>
Lucky&Liz: She's a Spencer all right.

>
 Elizabeth continued to push, until they could see the baby's head.

>
Doc: One more push, Liz.

>
 Elizabeth came up once more and gave it her all. She fell back and

>smiled as a tiny scream pierced the air. Lucky laughed and shook his head
smiling. The doctor held up the newest Spencer and said..

>
Doc: Congratulations Mr. and Mrs. Spencer, you have a healthy, beautiful baby

>girl.

> Elizabeth placed her hand to her mouth and cried tears of joy as she
saw her daughter for the first time. Lucky's mouth hung open as he admired

>the perfect bundle of joy that was made from him and Elizabeth. Lucky looked
down at Elizabeth.

>
Lucky: She's beautiful...I'm so proud of you, Elizabeth...I love you, baby.

>
Liz: I love you, too....And she's the most perfect thing I've ever seen.

>
 The doctors cleaned up the baby and wrapped it up in blankets. Then

>they placed her in Elizabeth's arms, as Lucky leaned in close to her,
beaming. They were almost speechless. She was so small, with perfect soft

>skin and little fingers and toes. Her hair was wispy and blonde and Lucky
and Liz could already see each other in her., Their tears were flowing and

>they couldn't keep from smiling.

>Liz: She's here, Lucky...Our little girl...She's here....Lexi Spencer.

> Lucky touched his daughter's cheek and whispered...

>Lucky: We've loved you for a long time already, Lexi Spencer...And that will
never change. We will always love and protect you....I

love you, sweetie.

>
 Elizabeth smiled lovingly at her husband and daughter, the two most

>important people in her life. She placed a kiss on the soft skin of her
baby's forehead and whispered.

>
Liz: I love you, honey.

>
~So God made little girls with laughing eyes and bouncing curls,

>With joyful hearts and infectious, smiles, enchanting ways and feminine
wiles.~

>::::::::::

> Elizabeth bent her head, the memories threatening to consume her.

She remembered that day like it had happened a moment ago. She had never

>felt so filled...and now all she felt was empty. Her little girl had

brightened her life so and now she was gone...forever maybe. The haunting

>images on the television did little to soothe her. Lucky placed two finger
between his eyes, squeezing them shut. He'd long ago stopped trying to

>prevent the tears from flowing. It was a losing battle. That day had been the
best of his life. Meeting his daughter for the first time was an experience

>that defied words. And from that day on, he had two loves of his life...But
now the thought of one made his heart ache with pain.

>::::::::::

> The tape went on, advancing 6 months. The date now read: 0531/05.

>Luke was once again holding the camera. They were in his backyard having a
Memorial Day picnic. Elizabeth was holding Lexi on her lap and Lucky was

>sitting beside her. Luke was holding the camera on Lexi's face, talking to
her.

>
Luke: Come on, darlin'. Say your first word. Come on.

>Say.."Spencer"....You can do it..."Spencer".

> Lucky and Elizabeth laughed.

>Lucky: Dad, that's not going to be her first word....Come on, sweetie, say
"Dad"...."Dad".

>
 Elizabeth shook her head and smiled.

>
Liz: No, that won't be it...Honey, say "Ma"...."Ma".

>
 Lexi giggled and shook her head back and forth, her blonde curls

>flying every which way and her blue eyes dancing. Just then, Lucas hit a
ball in Luke's direction, hitting him in the back of the head. Luke caught

>the camera before it dropped saying...

>Luke: Damn!

> The camera was still focused on the grass, but you could hear a tiny
voice forming its first word...

>
Lexi: Damn!

>
 And then a giggle, followed by an eruption of laughter from much

>older voices. When Luke finally straightened the camera he pointed it at
Lexi, as Lucky and Liz surrounding her and said...

>
Luke: That's my girl.

>
::::::::::

>
 Elizabeth and Lucky smiled at that memory. A parent always

remembers

>their child's first word fondly...And Lucky and Liz were no different. That
was the beginning of Lexi's talkative nature. She'd be shy around strangers,
>but talk up a storm around family and friends. And the "D" word was often
present in her vocabulary, no matter how many times she was reprimanded. She

>was stubborn...She was her own person...She was their little girl.
:::~::~

>
The tape went forward six more months. The date read: 11/10/05. It

>was Lexi's first birthday. The house was decorated and the family was
gathered. Lucky and Elizabeth sat on the floor with Lexi. She was surrounded

>by presents...and happy as can be. Then Lexi slowly got up onto her wobbly
feet and took a step. Lucky and Elizabeth held their breath, wondering if

>this was finally it. She smiled at them, her eyes focused on her parents'
faces. She was a few feet away from them and coming straight towards them.

>Lucky and Liz smiled, both of them stretching their arms out.

>Lucky: Come on, sweetie. You can do it. Come to mommy and daddy.

>Liz: Come on, honey...Oh you're doing so good.

>They watched as one leg was moved in front of the other and she
slowly made her way to them. She took three more steps, constituting "her

>first steps" and then fell into her proud parents' arms. Lucky and Elizabeth
smiled and enveloped their daughter in hug.

>
Lucky: You did it!

>
Liz: We're so proud of you!

>
Lucky and Elizabeth smiled at one another, as they thought of the

>incredible joy they had experienced that last year because of the angel in
their arms. They whispered to her....

>
Lucky&Liz: Happy 1st Birthday, Lexi...You are a wonderful gift to us each and

>everyday.

>~And when He'd completed the He'd begun,
He was pleased and proud of the job He'd done.~

>:::~::~

>Elizabeth and Lucky sniffed back their tears. Her first
birthday...Her first steps. They had both happened simultaneously and Lucky

>and Elizabeth had remembered them fondly. They were milestones in their
child's life...in their life as parents. Memories that held a special place

>in their hearts. But now they wondered if Lexi would ever be a part of them
again...And if they'd ever want to make anymore.

>:::~::~

>The tape went on, recounting more birthdays, holidays, vacations and
small milestones, Lorenzo's birth and Lexi's new role as a big sister. It

>went on until it reached Lexi's first day of school. The date was: 0904/09.

>They stood outside the school. Lucky held the camera and Elizabeth knelt next
to a crying Lexi, her blues resembling restless seas.

>
Lexi: Mommy, I don't want to go...Please don't make me.
>
 Elizabeth brought her thumb up to her daughter's cheek and wiped away
>a tear.

>Liz: Lexi, baby, don't cry. There's nothing to be scared of...I promise you.
 You'll have fun and make friends. You just have to give it a chance.
>
 Lucky spoke from behind the camera.
>
Lucky: Sweetie, you are a big girl and big girls go to school. Now Mommy
>and Daddy will be here when you come out. But you have to be strong for us
and make us proud.
>
 Lexi blinked back tears and turned to her mother.
>
Lexi: Okay, I'll try.
>
 Elizabeth smiled and hugged her.
>
Liz: Good girl. Be careful, have fun and I love you.
>
 Lexi's little arms wrapped around her mother's neck and she squeezed
>tightly. She reluctantly let go and went over to her father. Liz took the
camera and watched the exchange between father and daughter.
>
Lucky: You can do this, Lexi....Do you know why?
>
 Lexi nodded.
>
Lexi: Because I am a Spencer and we can do anything we put our minds to.
>
 Lucky smiled and nodded. Then he hugged his little girl to him and
>whispered.

>Lucky: That's right....I love you and good luck.

> With that, Lexi let go of Lucky and walked off into school. Lucky
wrapped his arm around his wife's shoulders, as the camera followed the small
>figure of their daughter inside...And you could hear their voices.

>Liz: She's growing up so fast...I can't believe she's starting school already.

>Lucky: I know...She's growing into quite a little girl....So much lies ahead
for her.
>
~For the world, when seen through a little girl's eyes

>Greatly resembled...Paradise.~
:::::::::::
>
 Lucky ran a hand through his hair and shook his head. Elizabeth
>wiped at some fleeing tears, the memory tugging at her heart strings. Lexi
was so scared that day, but she had survived it just fine. She was a
>fighter, a survivor. This wasn't any different, right? Parents never want to
see their children hurting...Their own hearts ache from every tear cried.
>Lucky and Elizabeth never wanted to see Lexi in pain...they only wanted to
protect her from the world's harsh realities. But they new that wasn't
>entirely possible...and they hoped that she was strong enough to overcome
whatever would lie in her way throughout life...They had always been so proud
>of her and, like any other parent, a child's first day of school is a huge
milestone. It signals the beginning of maturation and separation from their
>parents. It signals that beginning of many new things to come...Of a

life
yet to be led.

>
 The tape ran out just then and neither Lucky or Elizabeth could bear

>to put in the next one. This one had taken its toll. It had reminded them
of exactly what they were missing and in danger of losing for good....A

>precious, rare jewel....A jewel all their own...And jewel that was priceless.

> And as they made their way back upstairs, barely controlling their
emotions, they prayed to God that they would never lose the chance to make

>more memories with Lexi....That she would reach all of the milestones she was
meant to reach....That all the memories that were yet unmade wouldn't stay

>that way. There was still so many yet to come...her first dance...her first
date...her sweet sixteen birthday...Her first job...her graduation...her

>wedding day...her first child...her first grandchild. So many things that
they would fight to protect...

>
 But it was the little things that they would have to hold onto for

>now.....Every smile...every hug...every kiss...every word...every
step...every laugh...every tear...every "I love you"...every breath...every

>moment.

>
. . . . Chapter 4

>

> Lucky awoke the next morning, this time finding Elizabeth's side of
the bed empty. He shook his head, wondering where she was. He slowly got out

>of bed and made his way down the hall. He could hear a soft noise coming
from Lorenzo's room...a whimper. He slowly opened the door more and stood in

>the doorway. His already cracked heart broke a little more at what he saw.
Elizabeth was kneeling by his bedside, her head bent and lying on Lorenzo's

>chest. He could hear her crying. Evidently, she thought that Lorenzo was
still sleeping, but he wasn't. His eyes were wide open. Lucky watched his

>son stretch his tiny arm out and touch his mother's hair. Elizabeth felt him
and sat up, wiping at her eyes. Lucky entered the room and stood next to

>Elizabeth. They watched as Lorenzo looked at them, his eyes questioning.

>Lorenzo: Do you want me to wake Lexi up for school now?

> Lucky closed his eyes and he saw Elizabeth bend her head, a tear
falling onto the comforter. It seemed that Lorenzo had forgotten or blocked

>out all of yesterday's events. Or maybe he just wouldn't let himself believe
it. Lucky walked around to the other side of the bed and took Lorenzo's hand

>in his. The boy's eyes grew wider, sensing fear in his father's eyes.

>Lucky: Lorenzo, don't you remember what happened yesterday?

> Lorenzo nodded his little head.

>Lorenzo: Me went to school, then me played ball with Lexi. Then Lexi went
away for a little while...But she back now, right?

>
 Lucky ran his other hand through his hair, as he glanced at

>Elizabeth. She raised her hand to Lorenzo's hair and brushed it

back. Her
voice cracked as she replied.

>
Liz: No, baby, she's not back yet.

>
Lorenzo's eyes clouded over with confusion.

>
Lorenzo: Why?...Where is she then?...What happened to Lexi?

>
Lucky and Elizabeth looked at each other, wondering if they should

>tell him the truth. Elizabeth mouthed to him "I think we should."
This
would be something that they would most likely be dealing with for some time

>and keeping Lorenzo in the dark would only confuse and scare him more. Lucky
licked his lips and looked into his little boy's eyes.

>
Lucky: Cowboy, Lexi is missing...A bad person took her. But we are going to

>get her back as soon as we can. Remember the police?...Well, they are doing
all they can to find her. She will be back with us so..soon. So you pray for

>Lexi to come home, okay. Pray to God, just like we do every night before
bed. Ask him to keep her safe and to bring her home.

>
Lucky concluded, his throat closing with emotion. Elizabeth wiped at

>her eyes, trying to control her tears. Lorenzo watched them, taking it all
in. Elizabeth smiled slightly at him.

>
Liz: Do you understand all that, honey?...Do you have any questions?

>
Lorenzo's little head shook back and forth, signaling "no".
Lucky

>could see his eyes beginning to tear up and he could barely stand the pain.
Then Lorenzo held up a finger and his soft voice emerged.

>
Lorenzo: Is the bad person going to take me, too?

>
Lucky and Elizabeth's hearts caught in their chests. He was scared,

>of course he was scared. It was their job as parents to make him feel safe,
protect him...and right now they didn't feel like they could do either. Lucky

>internally grew angry at the bastard for stealing that away from them, too.
He cleared his throat and spoke to his son.

>
Lucky: No, Lorenzo, we're not going to let anything happen to you. You're

>safe. Mommy and Daddy are here and there will always be an officer outside.
You are safe...I promise.

>
Lorenzo nodded in understanding. Liz tried to smile and said.

>
Liz: Okay, honey, now go back to sleep for a little while. You aren't going

>to preschool today.

>Lorenzo nodded and turned on his side. Elizabeth and Lucky placed
kisses on his cheeks before they left the room. They left the door slightly

>open and stopped outside it. They were about to leave, when they heard
Lorenzo's tiny voice. They listened quietly...

>
Lorenzo: God, it's me, Lorenzo Spencer. Me just wanted to tell you

>something. Me love my sister a lot. And me miss her. So if you not too busy
could you please keep her safe and bring her back to my

family...And, one
>more thing...Could you help my Mommy and Daddy, too...They're so sad
and
always crying...Okay, thank you.
>
 Lucky and Elizabeth listened to their son's heartbreaking
prayer.
>They couldn't stop their tears and they fell into each other's arms,
seeking
each other's comfort. Lucky pulled back from Elizabeth,
wiping a tear from
>her face. Elizabeth looked into his eyes. They always told her
things that
his voice couldn't. They were saying a lot right now.
She could tell that
>they were angry. Lucky licked his lips and ran a hand through his
hair.

>Lucky: I can't do this, Elizabeth! I can't just stand here and do

nothing!...I can't.
>
 Elizabeth was about to say something in response, when Lucky
brushed
>past her and into their bedroom. She followed him silently as they
prepared
for their first full day without Lexi.
>
:::::
>
 One hour later, Lucky and Elizabeth were dressed and
downstairs. The
>police detectives were there early, too. Next to arrive were Luke
and Laura.
The doorbell rang again and Lucky went to answer it.
When he opened the door
>he was met with the frantic faces of his brother, Nikolas and his
wife,
Emily.
>
Nik: Lucky, what happened? We just got back from our trip to
Greece and we
>came to say hi. But instead we find your house crawling with police
cars.
What happened?
>
 Lucky sighed and ushered them inside. He swallowed hard.

>
Lucky: Nikolas, Em, yesterday afternoon Lexi was kidnapped from
our backyard.
>
 Nikolas and Emily were completely stunned and worry immediately

>appeared on their faces.

>Em: Oh my God, Lucky. I'm so sorry. Oh, how could this happen?!

> Nikolas placed an arm around Emily's shoulder. They had a daughter

of their own, born only five months after Lexi. Lila Cassadine,
named after
>Emily's grandmother who passed away a month before her birth. They
couldn't
imagine what Lucky and Elizabeth were going through.
This kind of thing
>makes every parent want to hold their children a little tighter and
a little
longer. Emily excused herself, saying that she was going
to see how Liz was.
>Nikolas placed a hand on his little brother's shoulder. He'd never
seen Lucky
looking like this before. His family meant everything
to him.
>
Nik: Is there anything I can do? Do the police have any leads?

>
 Lucky shook his head.
>
Lucky: No, they don't know anything. And just about anyone could
have done
>this....Just be there for me, man...That's all.

> Nikolas nodded, knowing that he would do all that he could to do
just
that. In the twelve years since Lucky had returned, Lucky

and Nikolas had
>truly become brothers. Friends and brothers. They had reached a
level of
trust and loyalty that they never would have thought
possible. Nikolas
>treasured that and he would honor it best he could in Lucky's time
of need.

> The brothers walked into the kitchen where Luke and the detectives

were gathered. Laura, Liz and Emily were in the living room
talking. Lucky
>and Nikolas sat down and Luke looked at the emotional wreck that was
his son.
He was doing his best to hide it, but pieces of him were
dying inside.
>
Luke: Son, last night your mother and I called all of your
family and friends
>that we knew and let them know what happened. They all wanted to
make a mad
dash over here, especially Bobbie and Carly, but I
told them to give you guys
>a few days to absorb this. Your mother tried to reach you, Nikolas,
but she
couldn't get through.
>
Nik: Yeah my cell was dead, thanks for trying.
>
 Luke nodded and noticed Lucky just staring off into space.
Taggert
>cleared his throat.

>Taggert: So far we've been able to keep this away from the media,
but that
shouldn't last much longer. You're going to have to
decide on how to handle
>them and if you wish to use them to help find Lexi.

> Lucky nodded, barely hearing him. The detectives left the kitchen
to
go check the officers in Lucky's office where they were set
up. Luke sat
>across from Lucky and Nikolas sat quietly, feeling a bit
uncomfortable. All
of the sudden, Lucky slammed both of his fists
down on the table. He looked
>up at them, his eyes roaming wildly.

>Lucky: I have to do something!...I...I can't just sit here!...Lexi
needs me!

> Luke shook his head.

>Luke: Lucky, there's nothing that you can do right now to help
her.

> Nikolas nodded in agreement.

>Nik: He's right, Lucky. You just have to be here for your family
right now.

> Lucky shook his head and laughed almost bitterly.

>Lucky: My family?...My family?...I couldn't keep my daughter
safe!..Don't you
understand that! I am supposed to protect them
and I couldn't!
>
Luke: Son, this wasn't your-
>
Lucky: No! Don't say it, Dad!...My son...my little boy is scared
that the
>same thing is going to happen to him. Four...four years old and
scared of
being in his home, playing in his own backyard. And
I...I told Elizabeth that
>it was only the kidnapper's fault, but no matter what I tell myself,
I
couldn't keep her safe.
>
 Lucky bent his head, squeezing his eyes shut. He kept talking,
while
>not looking up.

>Lucky: So I have to do something now...I have to make this right. I
owe this
to my little girl. I have to feel like I am doing
something...I failed her

>once, I won't do it again.

>Nik: Lucky, there's nothing you could have done.

> Lucky raised his eyes and looked at his brother and then his father.
He said in an eerily calm tone.
>
Lucky: Well, there's something I can do now.
>
 With that, Lucky quickly got up from the table and headed down the
hall. Luke and Nikolas followed him.

>Luke: Lucky, where are you going?..Don't do anything rash. It won't help
Lexi...Please, don't go.
>
 Lucky turned around and looked at Nikolas and his father and

>replied...

>Lucky: I have to.

> Without another word, Lucky turned on his heel and was out the door.
Nikolas looked at Luke.
>
Nik: Where do you think he's going?
>
 Luke stared at the door, not looking at Nikolas and replied...

>
Luke: One guess: The category is Homicidal Grandmothers for \$500.
>
::::::::::
>
 As soon as Lucky left, another relative arrived. Elizabeth opened the
door, surprised to find her sister, Sarah, standing behind it.

>Liz: Sarah.

> Sarah smiled slightly and stepped forward to give Liz a hug.

>Sarah: Hi, Lizzie. Laura called and told me what happened. I'm so sorry.

> Liz stepped back, allowing her sister in.

>Liz: Thank you, it was nice of you to come.

> Sarah smiled sweetly and nodded.

>Sarah: Of course I came..She is my niece.

> Elizabeth and Sarah stood there in awkward silence. The still barely
got along. Sarah had come back from Europe right after Lucky and Elizabeth
>had married. Elizabeth had hoped she and Sarah could develop a better
relationship, but Sarah had seemed unwilling. They were civil to one another,
>but it didn't go much further. And things only worsened when Audrey died a
year after Liz was married. Now they had almost nothing to connect them.
>Sarah had finished college and then moved back to Colorado, where she
attended graduate school with a degree in business. Now she was an executive
>for some food corporation and single. They saw each other on holidays and
when either would make the occasional trip to the other's state. Elizabeth
>still remained hopeful that they could have a better relationship, but Lucky
had no use for Sarah. He thought of her as completely selfish and unworthy of
>Elizabeth's time and care. But he supported Elizabeth and remained civil to
Sarah. He still couldn't believe he had ever had a thing for her.
>
 Just then Lorenzo came into the foyer, breaking the uncomfortable
>silence. He latched onto his mother's leg, frowning at his aunt.

>Lorenzo: Hi Aunt Sarah.

> Sarah looked down at her nephew and smiled slightly.

>Sarah: Hello, Lorenzo.

> Sarah bent down to give Lorenzo a hug, but he wouldn't budge. He

didn't like his Aunt Sarah. She was never very nice to him and
preferred to
>play with Lexi, rather than him. Also, for only four, he was a good
judge of
character. And Sarah just wasn't his cup of tea. Her
smile always seemed to
>be forced and her actions always came off as insincere and fake.
Elizabeth
bent down, prying her son off her leg and pushing him
to his aunt.
>
Liz: Lorenzo, that's not nice. Now give your aunt a big hug.

>
 Lorenzo begrudgingly hugged Sarah and they quickly separated.
Just
>then Nikolas walked into the foyer. Lorenzo smiled widely and ran
into his
arms.
>
Lorenzo: Uncle Nikki!
>
 Nikolas smiled and bent down to pick up his nephew. Lorenzo's

>feelings for his uncle were very different, however. He loved seeing
him and
Nikolas returned the feelings. Nikolas would often take
Lorenzo and Lexi out
>on his horses, among other things. They both adored him. Nikolas
tickled
him and smiled.
>
Nik: How are you doing, buddy?
>
Lorenzo: Okay.
>
 Nikolas looked up, noticing Sarah for the first time. He, like
Lucky,
>no longer had any use for her.

>Nik: Hello, Sarah...I'm surprised to see you here.

> Sarah smiled flirtatiously at Nikolas.

>Sarah: I don't see why. Like I told Lizzie, she is my niece,
too.

> Nikolas shrugged and took Lorenzo with him, leaving the sisters to

stand their uncomfortably once again. Sarah's arrival was just
another thing
>for Lucky and Liz to have to deal with now.

>::::::::::

> Lucky sat in his car outside the Port Charles hotel. He knew that

Helena's yacht was having mechanical problems and so she had a
room there.
>He didn't know what made him choose her to go after first.. He had
no more
evidence against her than anyone else. He had no evidence
at all. And this
>certainly wasn't her MO. But he couldn't let it go without checking
her out.
 He would never underestimate Helena Cassadine. And the
only reason that he
>needed to be there right now was the years of torture and pain that
Helena
had already caused his family.
>
 He quickly got out of the car, entered the hotel, found out her
room
>number and went up to her floor. He was surprised not to find Ari
guarding
the door. He checked the hallway, making sure that he
wasn't playing right
>into some trap. He raised his hand and knocked. Helena Cassadine
herself
answered the door. Lucky didn't wait for her to ask him
in, he walked right
>past her saying...

>Lucky: What'd you do, kill Ari, too?...Isn't answering doors below you?

> Helena smiled slyly and walked over to him.

>Helena: My dear, I assure you Ari is just fine...He is off on an errand...Now
to what do I owe the pleasure?

>
 Lucky stepped toward her, not willing to mince words. He stated

>plainly.

>Lucky: My daughter is missing and I want to know if you had anything to do
with it.

>
 Lucky watched her reaction to hearing Lexi was missing, her facial

>expression was noticeably surprised. But Lucky knew that it could have been
an act, all for his benefit to throw suspicion off herself.

>
Helena: Lucky, dear, how could you think such a thing? I have nothing to do

>with your darling daughter's disappearance.

> Lucky listened to her, studying her thoroughly. He wished his father
was there, he could always judge Helena better than he could. Helena smiled,

>continuing...

>Helena: One would think that the Spencer's would have learned their lesson by
now, having suffered so many tragedies or near ones. One would think that

>you would be extra careful by now with lives of your loved ones.

> Something in Lucky snapped, as Helena hit the sore point within
him...The thing that was gnawing at him. His eyes flared and his face grew

>red. He stepped forward, backing her up against the wall. Then he raised
his right hand, pinning her neck against the wall. He looked into her eyes

>and whispered, his words cold and spine chilling.

>Lucky: If I find out that you had anything to do with my daughter's
kidnapping, I swear to you that I will not rest until I have ended your

>miserable, pathetic excuse for a life...No place will be far enough for you
to run, no hiding place good enough...I will hunt you down like an animal

>does its prey...So if you value the breaths you take, you better not have
been involved.

>
 With that, Lucky released her neck from his grip. Helena fell to the

>ground, gasping for air. Lucky bent down to her and whispered in her ear...

>Lucky: And that's a promise...A genuine Spencer guarantee.

> Lucky then stood up and left the room.

>::::::::::

> Somewhere in a room, sat a little girl all alone. She was sitting on
a rug, humming a melancholy tune. Her head was bent and she was playing with

>a Barbie. The light shone in from the room's lone window, illuminating her
hair so that it resembled spun gold. The girl played quietly, never looking

>up. Suddenly, she heard the chirp of a bird, her head raised toward the
window and she smiled slightly. . . But her eyes told the real story. They

>were unmistakable and piercing as always. Something new in them existed,
however...Something dark and sad...Her blue gems were

now home only to pain,
>sadness, anger, confusion...and loss.

> She slowly lowered her head again and began playing, while her

haunting tune filled the otherwise silent air around her.
>

>. . . . Chapter 5

> Lucky slowly made his way up his front steps and entered his front

door. He ran a hand through his hair and walked down the hall to
the
>kitchen. His father and brother were the only ones in there and
looked up at
him when he entered, worry sketched on their faces.
Their eyes followed him
>to the refrigerator and watched him open it up. He reached inside
and pulled
out a can of coke. He slowly closed the door and let
his hand linger on the
>door, as his eyes caught ahold of something. He removed his hand
from the
door's handle and let his fingers travel across the
object. His eyes began
>to sting with tears as his mouth whispered her name.

> It was the drawing that Lorenzo had made the day before. Lucky felt

a tear traveling down his cheek, as his fingertips gently touched
the crayon
>figure that represented his little girl. Lorenzo's imperfect
lettering
stood above her head, stating her name. Her hair was an
odd mixture of red,
>yellow and orange. Her skin was pink and her lips scarlett. She was
wearing
a blue shirt, green skirt and black shoes. But it was her
eyes...her eyes
>that caught his own. Two perfect blue circles, that even in crayon,
sparkled
like diamonds. The few times he had seen those eyes
overcome with fear, had
>almost been too much for him. He never wanted to see that, never
wanted to
think about that. Her eyes were too pure, too
beautiful, too innocent to be
>marred by any such thing. He let his eyes travel to the paper's top
and read
the crooked words silently..."My Family". He closed his
eyes and felt the
>tears seep from beneath his eyelids. His family...twenty-four hours
ago they
had been whole and happy...now they were broken in more
ways than one.
>
 Lucky felt his knees weaken beneath him, but could do nothing
to stop
>them from giving out. Fortunately, Luke and Nikolas saw this and
reacted
quickly. The heartbreaking scene had almost stunned them
to the point of
>paralyzing them with emotions of their own. But it didn't and they
jumped up
from their seats, each grabbing him by an arm. They
brought him to a seat and
>he sank down into it. He waved a hand at them.

>Lucky: I'm fine...I just felt a little nauseous there...Maybe I am
getting
sick.
>
 Lucky and Nikolas shook their heads. Luke placed a comforting
hand on
>his son's.

>Luke: Lucky, it's okay to let it out. It'll kill you if you
don't.

> Lucky wiped at his eyes, shaking his head.

>Lucky: I have no right to cry, Dad. Lexi is the one who is scared
and alone.
I...I can't even imagine what she must be feeling.

>
 Luke nodded and looked at Nikolas, who seemed to be lost in thoughts

>of his own right then.

>Luke: How did it go with Helena?

> Lucky looked at him, surprised he knew where he had gone.

>Lucky: How did you know?

> Luke tilted his head to the side and smiled.

>Luke: I know you.

> Lucky nodded, running a hand through his hair.

>Lucky: I asked her point blank if she had anything to do it. She, of course,
denied it. You can read her better than I can, Dad. She seemed so smug, but

>that's Helena. I don't know, this just isn't her way.

>Luke: Well, I promise you this, son, if it is Helena, she'll never get
another chance to hurt this family again.

>
 Luke looked at Nikolas, who nodded in agreement. Nikolas had always

>hated his grandmother, but he had never truly wanted her dead until he found
about her involvement in Lucky's supposed death twelve years ago. And now, if

>she had anything at all to do with the disappearance of his neice, he would
see to it that she would scheme no longer.

>
Lucky: I lost it, Dad. I held her throat and told her that I would kill her

>if I found out she had anything to do with this. And I would, too...I would.

> Luke's eyes widened, at Lucky's confession. He knew he had it in him
if pushed far enough, but he didn't want him going the route Luke had so many

>times. But if this was the work of Helena...Lucky wouldn't have to do
it...He wouldn't get the chance...

>::::::::::
 Elizabeth, Emily, Laura and Sarah sat in the family room having a

>quiet conversation. Sarah and Laura had managed to find something to talk
about and Emily and Elizabeth were immersed in their own talk.

>
Liz: I just keep thinking that I could have done something...anything to

>prevent this.

> Emily shook her head, smiling at her long time friend.

>Em: Elizabeth, guilt will get you nowhere. You don't deserve that.

> Elizabeth nodded, wishing she could truly believe that. All of the
sudden, Sarah's bubbly voice broke into their conversation.

>
Sarah: So what do you say we go out to lunch and try to forget about all of

>this?

> Emily, Liz and Laura stared at Sarah in disbelief. They couldn't
believe that she was treating this as if it was a minor disturbance. True,

>they couldn't just stop living their lives altogether, but she was making it
seem as if a tuna on rye could make it all go away. Lexi had been missing for

>one day for heaven's sake. Elizabeth knew this was just like her sister.
Ignoring a problem and smiling sweetly, instead of dealing with it. Well,

>Elizabeth couldn't do that. Still, she was surprised by how inconsiderate
Sarah had just been. She was about to respond when

she heard Lucky's voice
>coming from the entrance to the room.

>Lucky: Sarah?

> Lucky looked at his sister-in-law, less than happy to see her there.
Sarah smiled at him and got up, walking towards him.

>
Sarah: Lucky, I am so sorry to hear about what happened to Lexi.

>
 Lucky nodded and gracefully avoided a hug by Sarah. He looked at
>Elizabeth.

>Lucky: Elizabeth, could I speak with you a minute, please?

> Elizabeth nodded and followed her husband out into the foyer.

>Lucky: What is she doing here?

>Liz: She's here because of Lexi. She's trying to be supportive I guess.

>Lucky: You know, she barely seemed to care about Lexi before.

>Liz: Lucky, you know that's not true. She loves Lexi.

>Lucky: Elizabeth, everything that Sarah has ever done was for her own benefit
and she's only grown worse over the years. We don't need to deal with her and
>whatever she plans on stirring up right now.

> Elizabeth nodded, knowing he was right, and said softly...

>Liz: Hopefully, she'll be gone soon enough.
::::::::::

> In an elegantly decorated office, sat a well dressed man talking on a
telephone.
>
Man: It was all taken care of?
>
Man2: Yes, just as you asked, Mr. Moreno.
>
Moreno: And the other matter?
>
Man2: It's under control, sir.
>
Moreno: Good, now wait for further directions from me.

>
Man2: Yes, sir.
>
 Moreno, Junior smiled and hung up the phone. He leaned forward in his
>chair and gently fingered his father's picture. His words were cold and
calculating as he whispered...
>
Moreno: My father's death won't be in vain much longer...Things have been set
>in motion.
::::::::::

> Sonny Corinthos sat on the couch in his penthouse. He shook his head,
thinking of what Luke had told him the night before. The poor kid, she was
>adorable and never afraid to tell him exactly what she thought. He couldn't
imagine what Lucky and Elizabeth were going through. Yes, he had lost a
>child when Lily died, but it wasn't the same. That child had only grown and
lived in his heart and mind. Lucky and Elizabeth had nurtured this child and
>created memories with her for years. If anything ever happened to his three
year old son, Jason, he didn't know what he'd do.

>
 He rubbed a hand down his face and let his fingers travel down his
>chin. His wife, Hannah, would be home from shopping any minute. Jay, as they
called his son, was asleep upstairs.
>
 His mind was a constand whirlwind. He hoped that this hadn't

been

>Moreno, Jr.'s doing. Luke would never forgive him if it had been, they had
worked too hard to rebuild their relationship after they thought Lucky had

>died. He knew Moreno, Jr. wanted revenge on him. He had killed his father
when he was twelve years old and he was sure that he would stop at nothing to

>avenge his loss. So Sonny had put people on Jay and Hannah. He'd offered
Lucky protection, but Lucky refused, believing he didn't need it and not

>wanting his family to live that way.

> Suddenly, Sonny was jerked from his thoughts by a frantic knock at
the door. He walked over to it, surprised that Johnny hadn't opened it.

>Johnny and Jason stood behind it, their faces white. Sonny's heart dropped
and he steadied himself for the bad news that seemed to have become routine

>for him.

>Sonny: What happened?

> Jason's eyes were still and emotionless, as he stated...

>Jason: Sonny, Hannah was attacked while trying on clothes in a stall at
Windhams. She was shot by someone hiding in the stall next to hers. Alex

>was waiting outside the dressing room when he heard the shot. He rushed into
her, but the shooter must have slipped out after he went in.

>
 Sonny blinked back his tears and tried to remain calm.

>
Sonny: How is she?

>
Jason: She was taken to GH and she is in critical condition right now.

>
 Sonny nodded.

>
Sonny: Okay, Johnny bring the car-

>
 Jason held up a hand, interrupting Sonny.

>
Jason: That's not all. The shooter left a note that Alex found on Hannah's

>chest.

> Jason somehow had the note, eventhough they both knew full well that
it was police evidence. Sonny took the bloodstained note out of Jason's hand

>and read it to himself...

> THIS WASN'T THE BEGINNING. . . AND IT WON'T BE THE END.

> Sonny swallowed hard, as he wondered if Lexi had been the
beginning...and vowed to never let the end become a reality.

>::::::::::
 The afternoon passed quickly, still no leads coming in. The media

>was still unaware of the kidnapping, but that would soon be a thing of the
past. Lucky heard the doorbell ring and he went to answer it. He smiled at

>his aunt and cousin.

>Lucky: Hi aunt Bobbie, Carly.

> Bobbie smiled at her nephew and enveloped him in a hug.

>Bobbie: I am so sorry, honey. Let me know if there's anything I can do.

> Lucky nodded and was soon enveloped in another hug by Carly. Carly
and Lucky had grown very close in the last twelve years. When he had

>returned, Carly knew that she didn't want to waste anymore opportunities like
she had before. She vowed to get to know her cousin and she tried her best.

>They really got along well and they became very close, each protective of the
other. Lucky was honest with Carly and unafraid to call her on one of her

>schemes. He was the one that made her realize that marrying A.J. was nothing
but a mistake. And now Jason and Carly were celebrating their tenth

>anniversary next month. Carly smiled at Lucky, unaware of what had just
happened to her best friend of eleven years, Hannah.

>
Carly: Just like mama said, if there's anything at all you need, let us

>know. Jase or Sonny might be able to help.

> Bobbie excused herself and went to go see her brother. Lucky lead
Carly into the family room, where now only Elizabeth resided. Elizabeth

>smiled at her cousin-in-law and friend.

>Liz: Hi, Carly.

> Carly smiled and hugged Elizabeth.

>Carly: I'm so sorry, honey.

>Liz: Thank you.

> They all sat down and Carly looked at them.

>Carly: I thought that maybe I could help you by sharing how I felt when
Michael was taken all of those years ago.

>
 Lucky placed his hand in Elizabeth's and nodded.

>
Carly: Well, when I first realized Michael was missing, I immediately blamed

>myself. It wasn't something that I talked about a lot, but I thought about it
so much. If only I hadn't walked away...if only I hadn't turned around.

>
 Elizabeth wiped at a tear, as she remembered the moment. Elizabeth

>already felt like she could write a book on "if onlys".

>Liz: That's how I feel, Carly. I looked away and then she was gone. It...it
was my fault.

>
Lucky: I feel the same way. I refused protection from Sonny. Even if this

>isn't Moreno's doing, she still would have been protected. I should have done
something more...I could have stopped this.

>
 Carly shook her head, licking her lips.

>
Carly: But you can't think that way. Both of you have to stop blaming

>yourselves. I shouldn't have walked away that day, I know that. I was
self-absorbed and not thinking about what was best for Michael. But that

>wasn't an invitation for Tony to take him. I may have made a mistake, but
Tony made a choice. And he was to blame...he was at fault.

>
 Lucky and Elizabeth nodded, their guilt lessening for the time being

>at least.

>Carly: The most important thing to do right now is to never give up hope that
you'll see that beautiful little girl again...It's the only thing you can do.

>::::::::::
 Luke slammed his fist down on the kitchen counter and drew in a long

>drag of his cigar with his other hand.

>Luke: Damn it, Barbara!....I feel so helpless!

> Bobbie stood behind her brother, a comforting hand placed on his

shoulder.
>
Bobbie: I know, Luke.
>
 Luke turned to face his sister, his eyes red with tears cried.
The
>last time Bobbie had seen him like this was after Lucky had "died".
Luke
almost didn't survive that and Bobbie hoped Lucky wouldn't
have to find out
>if he could. Bobbie knew how much Luke loved his granddaughter and
she knew
this was tearing him apart. He smiled weakly at her.

>
Luke: I remember when I taught her how to ride a two wheeler a
couple of
>years back. The first time she tried to go by herself, she fell off.
Her
elbow was scraped and she was biting her lip so that she
wouldn't cry. And
>she didn't. She got right back up from the ground and got back on
the bike.
 She was so determined and so stubborn...Just like her
parents. She's a
>Spencer, Barbara...a chip-off-the-old-block-Spencer...I...I don't
want to
lose her.
>
 Bobbie smiled sympathetically at Luke and squeezed her hand in
his.
>
Bobbie: They'll get her back, Luke...You have to believe that.

>
 Luke shook his head, his eyes filled with despair and
hopelessness.
>
Luke: I don't believe in anything anymore, Barbara...I believed
that our
>life, mine and yours, could only be better than it was when we were
kids.
And now we've suffered more as adults than we did back
then...I believed that
>Laura and I would be together forever and I saw myself come as close
to
losing that as possible...I believed that parents aren't
supposed to bury
>their children, yet you and I both have...I believed my son was dead
and
lived the pain of that belief. But he wasn't, Barbara...And I
believed that
>children were safe in their backyards, in the damn daylight!...But
I...I
guess I finally found out that believing is for fools...and
I'm no longer
>willing to play the part.

> Bobbie lowered her head, Luke's words leaving her almost
speechless.
How could someone live their life without believing,
without hoping? How
>could he make it through this without having that to hold onto?
Bobbie
struggled for something, anything to say.
>
Bobbie: Luke, some of what you believed turned out for the
better. You
>thought Lucky was dead, but he wasn't. That doesn't mean that you
should
stop believing in anything. It means that you should
always have hope that
>even things you believe to be true, bad things, will turn around.
That this,
Luke...That this will turn around. You have to hold
onto something...You
>have to believe that God will bring her back.

> Luke grinned, shaking his head. Bobbie never talked about God much,

especially not to him. She must have been grasping for something.

>
Luke: I definitely don't believe in Him, Barbara. I don't

believe in a force
>that can sit back and watch people suffer...That doesn't do a damn
thing to
stop it. You tell me to believe in God and I say I can
only believe in
>things I can control...and He ain't one of them...Look around you,
Barbara,
think of the pain in your life, think of the pain in
mine...You have the
>force you call God to thank for that.

>Bobbie only shook her head and whispered...

>Bobbie: Look around *you*, Luke...Think of the blessings in it,
think of the
ones you love...You have God to thank for them, too.

>
 Luke stared after her sister, as she turned on her heel and
left the
>kitchen, leaving him to think about all that she had
said.
:::::::
> Around six o'clock, the house began to thin out. Nik and Em went
home
to see Lila. Sarah left a few hours earlier, saying that she
was going back
>to her hotel. Bobbie and Carly returned to their respective homes.
All that
remained was Liz, Lucky, Luke, Laura, Taggart and two
more detectives. The
>doorbell rang and Lucky sighed, wondering who was visiting now. He
left his
position at the kitchen table and slowly walked to the
door. He opened it up
>and was surprised to see no one behind it. He stepped forward and
looked
outside, but still didn't see anyone. When he retreated he
noticed a white
>envelope sitting in the middle of the welcome mat. He bent down and
picked it
up, inspecting it. The envelope was blank, no writing
on it at all. He
>closed the door and walked back into the kitchen, where everyone was

gathered. He was staring at the envelope, when Taggart spoke up.

>
Taggart: Did you just get that?
>
 Lucky nodded.
>
Lucky: No one was outside and this was on the mat.

>
Taggart: Okay, Kendall, Waters, check the surrounding area, see
if you can
>find the messenger. Lucky, handle it carefully. It's doubtful, but
we might
be able to get fingerprints off of it.
>
 Lucky nodded, as Elizabeth came to stand next to him. He
carefully
>opened the sealed envelope and pulled out a white sheet of paper.
Their eyes
widened as they realized what it was...A ransom note.
Lucky swallowed hard
>and looked at the letters. They were cut from different magazines
and had
been glued on the paper. Each letter was a different
shape and size. He
>slowly read...

> MR. AnD MrS. sPeNcEr: WE hAVe YoUR DAuGHTeR.
As OF nOW ShE iS
ALiVe And wELL. HeR FuTuRe SaFeTY
>DEPeNds On YoUR COOpErATIOn. ToMOrroW aT 3 pM. YoU ArE To
 DroP
a SuITcAsE wITh 1 MiLLIoN DoLLARs in iT, SMaLL
>BiLLs. LeAve iT on A TaBlE, OuTsIdE OF KeLLY's. IF wE
SUSpEcT
PoLiCe INvOLVeMeNt, YoUR DAuGHTeR WiLL bE KiLLeD. Do
>NOT AtTeMpT AnYThIng... It'S NoT In YoUR BeST InTeReSt... Or

YoUR DAuGHTeRS.
>
 The letter ended and they all stood their stunned, wondering

exactly

>what this latest development would mean for the return of their daughter.

>
. . . . Chapter 6

>

> Lucky and Liz turned around to face Taggart and the two detectives

who had just returned from searching the area.

>
Kendall: We didn't find anyone, Taggart.

>
Taggart nodded and took the ransom note from Lucky and handed it to

>Waters, so they both could read it. Taggart then took out his cell phone,
called Mac and told him to get there as soon as possible.

>
Taggart: Okay, let's just wait until the commissioner gets here to discuss

>what has to be done.

> Lucky, Liz, Laura, and Luke all nodded, hoping that they would soon

be one step closer to getting Lexi back.

>
Mac soon arrived. He, Taggart and the two detectives went into

>Lucky's office to discuss matters.

>Mac: Okay, before we get to the ransom note, Taggart have you finished
running the routine checks on all of the Spencer's family, friends and

>acquaintances?

> Taggart nodded, stepping forward.

>Taggart: Yes, sir, I have. We ran routine checks on everyone and they all
checked out. Nikolas and Emily Cassadine were in Greece, as believed. Bobbie

>Spencer was at the hospital, Carly Morgan was at Michael's school for a
parent-teacher conference. Sonny and Jason were both at the club with Luke,

>doing whatever it is they do. Witnesses saw them there. Tony Jones was
working at the clinic. Sarah Webber's boss was contacted in Boulder, Colorado

>at the Gretyer Food Corporation. He confirmed that she was in a meeting with
him all afternoon working on proposals. Mike Corbin was working at his

>restaurant. All of the Quartermaines, Jaxs and Cassadines checked out, too.

> Mac nodded.

>Mac: Okay, now what about our prime suspects?

> Taggart nodded, tapping his pen against his notepad and grinning.

>Taggart: Surprise, surprise, the ones that still reside here in P.C. all have
alibi's that checked out.

>
Mac ran a hand through his hair.

>
Mac: They always do...Come on, Taggart. Give me something...Okay, what were

>their alibi's?

>Taggart: Helena Cassadine was having a late lunch at the Port Charles Grill
with Katherine Bell, it seems she will be underwriting the Nurse's Ball this

>year. Moreno, Jr. was at a ceremony at the docks for the grand opening of his
drug den...I mean, restaurant.

>
Taggart smiled and Mac nodded.

>
Mac: Any luck locating Tom Baker and Cesar Faison yet?

>
Taggart shook his head.

>
Taggart: No, sir. But we have men working round the clock on it.

>
Mac: Good. Now we know full well that alibi's for Helena Cassadine and
>Moreno mean nothing. They don't do their own dirty work. Same for Sonny and
Jason, but I doubt they are involved in this. They have no reason to be.
>Moreno made his move for revenge against Sonny by shooting his wife this
afternoon. We have no other evidence suggesting that he did anything prior
>to this out of revenge or will continue to do anything more. Of course, we
can't eliminate him yet. Okay, call all the Spencers in here. I want to
>discuss the ransom note with them.

> Taggart went to get them and Luke, Laura, Lucky and Liz all entered.
Luke slapped Mac on the shoulder.
>
Luke: 'Bout time, Bubba.
>
 They all sat down, while Mac, Taggart and the two detectives stood
>before them. Mac studied the ransom note. Liz held tightly onto Lucky's hand
and then cautiously spoke up.
>
Liz: Doesn't this mean that it must be a crazed fan, someone who knows we
>have money and is trying to take advantage?

> Mac shook his head.

>Mac: Normally, it would. But you have too many clever enemies for that. It is
very possible that the ransom note is just a cover to divert suspicion away
>from one of the prime suspects. It's none of their MOs, but that doesn't take
the potential away.
>
 Laura shook her head.
>
Laura: I don't understand. What leads you to believe that?

>
 Taggart cleared his throat, looking at Lucky and Liz.

>
Taggart: Mr. and Mrs. Spencer, you are very wealthy, correct? I mean, would
>one million dollars be a large portion of your estate?

> Lucky shook his head. It was common knowledge that Lucky and
Elizabeth were extremely wealthy. Elizabeth had made good money from her
>paintings. Lucky's last contract had been huge because L&B had grown and
expanded considerably from his success. The revenue from his CDs and other
>items had been through the roof over the past years. And they had saved and
invested very wisely...It was true. One million dollars would not be a very
>large amount to demand as ransom from such a wealthy family.

>Lucky: No, it would not be.

> Mac nodded.

>Mac: That leads us to believe that the kidnapper's main motive is not money.
Helena and Moreno do not need money and wouldn't be interested in demanding
>ransom from you, unless it served some other purpose...Which would be to
point us in another direction, such as fans or people who know of your
>wealth. Of course, it still could be just about anyone, who for some reason
made a low demand. The use of "we" could also be a diversion tactic, designed
>to point at a group, rather than our prime suspects. But we can't eliminate
Cassadine, Moreno or Faison and Baker, who we have yet

to locate.

>
 Luke shook his head, growing angry at the little progress that had

>been made. So far, he had let the police handle this...But if something
didn't happen soon, he would take matters into his own hands.

>
Luke: Bubba! What is it that you and your circus monkeys do all day? You

>haven't found Baker or Faison yet?! Damnit, they could have her! And you
don't have one damn clue as to where they could be!

>
 Lucky touched his father's hand, silently telling him to calm down.

>Lucky had been remarkably calm, taking this all in.

>Mac: I assure you we are doing all we can to locate them.

> Luke shook his head and responded as calmly as possible.

>Luke: Do more.

> Mac just nodded, knowing that Luke was reacting out of grief and
worry. Lucky spoke up.

>
Lucky: Okay, so how do we go about doing what this ransom note says?

>
Taggart: Can you have the specified amount ready by tomorrow afternoon?

>
Lucky: Not a problem.

>
Mac: Good. Now we will provide you with a suitcase that has a tracing device

>in its lining. So this way we can-

> Mac could say no more because Lucky had loudly objected.

>Lucky: No way, man! The note said they would kill Lexi if they even
suspected police involvement!...If they find that tracing device, we'll never

>get Lexi back alive!...I will not let you play with the life of my
daughter!...I will not!

>
 Elizabeth felt the tears well up in her eyes, as the mere thought of

>her daughter being killed paralyzed her with fear. Laura noticed this and
wrapped a comforting arm around her shoulder. Mac placed his hands up, palms

>flat out, trying to calm Lucky down.

>Mac: Lucky, I understand your fears, but I promise you that it will not be
found. The device is no bigger than a dime and will be sewn into the lining

>of the suitcase. It will be virtually impossible for them to find it, unless
they tear the lining out. In that case, they would only do that once they

>were in a secure position, where they could check it out. And if they did,
the tracing device will have already led us to their location.

>
Lucky: But if Lexi is not at that location, then she will still be in danger.

>
 Mac nodded, solemnly.

>
Mac: That's true, but it's a chance we have to take. Lucky, Liz, I am going

>to be honest with you here. This is the only thing we have to go on right
now. It's the only chance that Lexi has at this moment. The longer we wait,

>the more our chances of getting her back alive and well decrease...I'm sorry,
but this is the only way.

>
 Lucky looked at Elizabeth, who slowly nodded.

>
 Lucky: Okay, we'll do the tracing device.
>
 Mac: Good. If all goes as planned, tomorrow at this time, we'll have some
> idea who took Lexi and where she might be.

> All the Spencers nodded, hoping against hope that that would be

 exactly what happened.
>
 ::::::::::
>
 Alone in the park, sat a man. He was sitting on their bench,

> allowing the wind to blow through his hair. He smiled, as he turned around
 to admire the bushes behind him. That was where they had spent their best
> times together. He shook his head with a wicked grin, remembering how she
 had looked that night. He couldn't have resisted if he'd wanted to.
>
 He knew that he couldn't miss their anniversary...not this year.
> Their thirteenth anniversary...what a special one. So he had returned to
 this town, exactly three months before, on the anniversary of their night
> together. No one had noticed his return, not even her. How could she not
 notice that he was back?
>
 He had seen her though, a month after his return. She was by the
> swings and he had watched her unnoticed, just like he had that night. She
 was pushing a strikingly beautiful little girl on the swings. She had caught
> his attention, just as her mother had that night. It had to be her daughter,
 there was such a resemblance. There was no way her daughter would like
> him...that man who had thought himself tough enough to take him down. He'd
 been so wrong. He had spent a few years in prison and that had been the
> man's fault, not hers. He would have to pay for his time lost with her. But
 first she had to notice him...he had to get her attention...anyway he could.
>
 Yes, he was definitely back in town.
>
 ::::::::::
>
 Luke walked to the door, after hearing the bell ring. He smiled at
> his long time friend and partner who stood behind it...But his smile quickly
 dissolved, when he noticed Sonny's appearance. His hair was a mess, his
> clothes disheveled and his face worn with worry. Luke ushered him inside.

> Luke: Sonny, what happened?

> Sonny ran a hand down his chin and shook his head.

> Sonny: Hannah was shot this afternoon. She's critical.

> Luke placed a hand on the couch to steady himself. He'd grown very
 fond of Hannah.
>
 Luke: Sonny, I am so sorry...It was Moreno.
>
 Sonny nodded. He reached into his pocket and pulled out the blood
> spattered note that had been left on Hannah. He handed it to Luke.

> Sonny: The shooter left this.

> Luke read it to himself: This wasn't the beginning...and it won't be
 then end. His eyes widened and he looked up at Sonny.

>
 Luke: You think that Lexi might have been the beginning?

>
 Sonny shrugged.
>
Sonny: She could have been. I have my men working on it, seeing if they can
>come up with anything. Well, I have to get back to Hannah, I just wanted to
let you know.
>
 Luke nodded and placed a comforting hand on his friend's shoulder.
>
Luke: Thank you, partner...Give the little lady my love.
>
 Sonny nodded and then turned to go out the door. Before leaving, he
>turned around and spoke in a determined tone...

>Sonny: I swear to you, Luke, that if Moreno had anything to do with Lexi's
disappearance, he will pay. He's already on my list for Hannah...It'll be
>like two birds with one stone...I promise you that.

> Luke nodded, knowing that Sonny would stay true to his word.

>::::::::::

> Lucky spent the rest of the day preparing the ransom. The suitcase
was brought in, the tracing device installed and the money placed inside.
>Luke and Laura bid them good-bye, promising to be there early next morning.
Mac and Taggart left, leaving Kendall and Waters to man the setup in the
>office. They would be staying the night, both as protection and in case the
kidnapper made anymore contact. They both wondered how much longer it would
>be till the media got ahold of this story.

> Lucky and Elizabeth had put Lorenzo to bed hours earlier and had just
finished checking on him. They were walking hand in hand, as they passed
>Lexi's room. Elizabeth stopped, her tears forming again. She pulled Lucky
towards the door. She felt a need to be near to her daughter in some way.
>Lucky felt the same way, but he was afraid that all of Lexi's things would be
too much for her to bear...too much for himself to bear. He gently placed a
>hand on her shoulder.

>Lucky: Elizabeth, are you sure you want to do this?

> Elizabeth smiled, taking his hand in hers again. He was always
trying to protect her.
>
Liz: I think we have to, Lucky. I..I-
>
 Elizabeth began to cry and Lucky wiped the tears away from her face.
>
Lucky: What, Elizabeth?
>
 Elizabeth sniffed back her tears and spoke softly.
>
Liz: I...I feel like I am forgetting her. I know...I know it's ridiculous,
>she's been missing for a little more than a day. But it just...it just feels
like an eternity. I know I could never truly forget her, but it's the little
>things. The little things that seem like I haven't seen or felt in forever.
Like her arms around my neck...or..or her little lips giving me a kiss on my
>cheek. Or when she'd smile at the smallest thing and her eyes would light
up....or wh..when she'd laugh at something and end up making us all laugh
>along with her....It's like all of those things, the way they made me feel
seeing them, feeling them, are fading away every moment that she's not

>here...and I..I..I--

> Elizabeth could say no more. Her emotions had overtaken her. She fell
into Lucky's arms and they both cried for their daughter. Lucky felt the

>same way as Elizabeth did. He slowly let go of her and placed a soft kiss on
her lips.

>
Lucky: I feel the same way, Elizabeth. Like every second is a year without

>Lexi. And that every second that passes, all that we remember of her,
diminishes a little bit. So you're right. We can't let that happen and we

>can't let ourselves feel that way.

> Elizabeth nodded and Lucky slowly turned the doorknob to Lexi's room.
The curtains to her windows were open and the moonlight shone in, casting

>shadows through out the room and illuminating parts of it. It looked so
lonely, so empty. Lucky and Elizabeth could almost see Lexi dancing around

>the room, her hair gliding behind her and her eyes sparkling. They could
almost hear her laughter filling the silent, sad room.

Lucky moved his hand

>to the lightswitch and flipped it on. The light filled the room, only
causing Elizabeth and Lucky to realize that much more how heartbreakingly

>unoccupied it was. Their eyes traveled around the room, studying each part
of it. The walls were painted pink, Lexi's favorite color. A border of

>lilacs decorated the top of each wall. She had a canopy bed, with a pink and
lavender striped canopy covering it and a comforter to match. One wall had

>an oak dresser, while another had an oak bureau. The center of the room had
a little white table, with matching chairs. Lucky and Elizabeth remembered

>the many tea parties that they had attended, hosted by their little girl.
Stuffed animals filled a wicker rocking chair in the corner and shelves were

>filled with her favorite Barbie dolls. Lucky and Elizabeth let their eyes
travel to Lexi's favorite toy, her Barbie doll house. She would spend hours

>playing with that house, rearranging the furniture and placing her Barbies
inside. Lucky and Elizabeth slowly walked over to the house, running their

>hands across its roof. They sat down in front of it, tears blurring the
images the house presented.

>
Liz: She loved this so much. I used to have to drag her away from it to come

>to dinner.

> Lucky smiled, remembering.

>Lucky: I remember when we gave it to her. It was the Christmas that she was
four. That thing was so hard to put together. You and I spent all night

>Christmas Eve doing it. But it was more than worth it. Seeing how her eyes
sparkled on Christmas morning when she opened it, was a gift in itself...I'll

>never forget it.

> Lucky wiped at his cheeks, the tears continuously pouring from his
eyes from the memory. Lucky looked at Elizabeth, who was fingering the house

>and gently weeping. She turned her face up to Lucky, her tears not enough to
cloud the fear present in her eyes. Her voice broke as

she spoke.

>
Liz: What if we never get to share another Christmas with our little girl,

>Lucky? What if our last one, was truly our last with her?...God, Lucky, I
wouldn't be able to stand it!...I..I couldn't do it! Every birthday, every

>holiday, every day, living without Lexi...I couldn't do it, Lucky...I know I
couldn't.

>
 Lucky pulled her to him and into his arms. He didn't know what to

>say. He felt the same way. He knew he couldn't make it. Elizabeth pulled
back and Lucky spoke.

>
Lucky: I know, Elizabeth. I don't want to even try to imagine sharing all of

>those things without Lexi. I don't want to have to. And I hope to God that
it doesn't come to that.

>
 Elizabeth's lower lip trembled, as she spoke.

>
Liz: Lucky, I am so scared to think of what she could be going through. Of

>what that bastard could be doing to her! When I was raped, those were the
most frightening moments in my life, until now that is. But I was fifteen

>years old. She's only six...She's just a baby! What if the same thing
happens to her? What if...if it already has?...What if we get her back and

>she's so broken that her life will never be even remotely the same?...And
what if he takes it too far and we find her, but not al..al--

>
 Elizabeth couldn't even say the words. They both didn't want to

>imagine that their daughter was anything but alive. But it was something that
had crossed their minds...that had festered in the darkest places of their

>minds, where no hope existed. What was happening to Lexi? No one could know
and her parents were sickened by the possibilities. If she was being

>physically hurt, then there was no telling how far the kidnapper could go.

>Lucky: I know, Elizabeth. I haven't wanted to think about the possibilities.
But we just have to keep hoping that Lexi is all right and that she'll be

>returned to us just fine. She will always have memories of being kidnapped,
that won't go away, they'll only diminish with time. But as long as we get

>her back, then we'll deal with whatever she's been through together. The
most important thing is that we'll have her back. We can deal with anything,

>as long as she's with us. Elizabeth, I know it's hard, but we just have to
hope for the best.

>
 Elizabeth nodded, knowing her husband was right.

>
Liz: I just keep thinking that she is so scared and confused. She doesn't

>understand where she is, what's going on or where we are. She's so young,
Lucky...I...I miss her so much.

>
Lucky: I know, baby. I do, too...We'll get her back soon...We just have to

>keep believing that.

> Lucky and Elizabeth got up from the ground and moved to Lexi's twin
bed. Elizabeth moved her hand across the comforter. She sat at the head of

>the bed and picked up Lexi's pillow. She held it up to her nose, inhaling
the sweet smell of her daughter. Lucky watched Elizabeth, his heartbreaking
>even more. Elizabeth pulled the pillow away and Lucky could see the marks
her tears had left behind. Elizabeth placed the pillow back down and picked
>up the worn bear that lay next to it. It was Boris, Elizabeth's bear as a
child. Elizabeth had never slept without it as a child and even a teenager.
>When her daughter was born, she gave her the bear to call her own. Lexi had
loved it since she was a baby...Carrying it everywhere and not sleeping
>unless she had it to hold onto. Elizabeth's fingers grazed the soft, matted
fur of the bear. It had been washed many times, but it didn't help its
>appearance. Its ear was ripped and its eyes scratched, one falling out. The
nose that Elizabeth's dog had removed as a child, left an even bigger hole
>now. Elizabeth held it close, her teardrops wetting it's fur. Lucky placed
his arm around her shoulder, touching the bear with his other hand. He could
>picture Lexi sleeping with it, her little arms holding onto it tightly, close
to her face. Lucky looked at the worn spot on the left side of its face.
>That's where Lexi had always put her cheek when she slept. Lucky wiped at the
tear cascading down his cheek. Elizabeth whispered...
>
Lexi: She loved this more than I did. She never could sleep without it...How
>is she sleeping now, Lucky? She's scared and she doesn't have it with
her...She...She can't sleep without it, Lucky.
>
Lucky nodded, saying softly...
>
Lucky: I know, Elizabeth...But the angels are watching her and singing her to
>sleep.

>Elizabeth smiled and nodded. Lucky always sang Lexi to sleep. But
when it thundered and Lexi was too scared to fall asleep, Lucky would tell
>her that it was the angels and that they were singing her to sleep. It always
made her feel better and a storm was now something that brought a smile to
>her face.

>Elizabeth held the bear close to her and slowly lay down on the bed,
placing her head on the pillow. Lucky followed her lead, cuddling up to
>Elizabeth, kissing her cheek lightly and placing his head on the pillow next
to hers. For now, this would have to be the closest thing to their daughter
>that they could have.

>::::::::::

>In a room, a beautiful little girl lay wide awake on a cot. The
sounds of a storm began to blare outside her window, the thunder announcing
>its arrival...But the little girl only smiled and squeezed her eyes tightly
shut.
>
Yes, the angels were indeed singing Lexi to sleep that night...and
>watching over her until her parents would once again be able to.

>
. . . . Chapter 7

>
 The sun shone through the windows of Luke and Laura's room, gently
>welcoming them to a new day...But these days were no longer the bright, happy
ones they had come to know...And they wouldn't be until their granddaughter
>was brought back to them safe and sound. Luke smiled at Laura, as she slowly
awakened.
>
Luke: Morning, baby.
>
 Laura smiled and lightly kissed Luke. She sat up in bed and let her
>eyes gravitate to her night table. She smiled at the pictures that cluttered
the small table. It was her way of protecting the ones she loved when she
>couldn't be near them. She knew it was silly. Just by having the pictures
near her didn't mean that she was providing any kind of protection for them.
>But it made her feel better...feel closer to her loved ones when she couldn't
be physically close to them. She reached to the table and picked up a picture
>close to the front. She smiled through her sudden tears. It was Lexi on her
last birthday. Luke blinked back his own tears, as he studied the photo. It
>was in a silver frame, with the words "Grandma and Grandpa's little angel"
engraved beneath it. Laura smiled, running her fingers across the cool of
>the silver. She admired the picture. Lexi was sitting at the front of the
dining room table, a huge cake placed in front of her. Her hair was in
>pigtails and a party hat was perched on top of her head...And she was
smiling. She was smiling the smile that Luke and Laura had come to
>adore...The smile that could get her out of any trouble with them...The smile
that melted their hearts the first time they saw it and everyday since. And
>her eyes twinkled from the candles' light. Her blue eyes were smiling right
along with her lips...The same blue eyes that Luke and Laura had first laid
>eyes on twenty-eight years ago, were now mirrored in their granddaughter.
Laura placed a hand to her mouth, letting her tears fall in between her
>fingers. She spoke, almost inaudibly...
>Laura: She's so beautiful, Luke...The perfect combination of everything
wonderful in Lucky and Liz.
>
 Luke nodded, smiling.
>
Luke: That's right, baby...And she's got the Spencer attitude to go right
>along with them.
> Laura smiled at Luke and then pointed at the cake in the picture.
>Laura: I remember when she helped Liz and I make that cake. Oh my God, I've
never seen such a mess!
>
 Laura laughed through her tears, remembering the moments.

>
Laura: Chocolate cake, with chocolate chips in it and chocolate frosting to
>top it off. That's what she wanted and who could refuse her? Elizabeth was
sure she'd be up half the night doing cartwheels and I think she was pretty
>much on target. She helped us crack the eggs, dropping more shell than eggs
into the bowl. Then when we finally got it all mixed

up, Elizabeth and I
>turned our backs...and do you know what she did?

> Luke smiled, shaking his head. Laura continued, her tears never

ceasing.
>
Laura: She dumped the rest of the chocolate chips in! Half a
bag...and she
>dumped it all in!...I remember turning around and looking at her
face. She
smiled at me with all the innocence of a saint. I knew
something was up
>though. She was wearing the Spencer badge of false innocence.

> Luke chuckled, very familiar with the concept. Laura shook her
head,
looking down at the picture.
>
Laura: So I said "Lexi Spencer, did you just do something you
weren't
>supposed to?" She shook her head, smiling wide and responded,
pointing at
the empty bag. "No, grandma. Grandpa always says, '
if you're going to do
>something, do it right.' Now, this cake is right." I only shook my
head,
smiling and laughing...There was no arguing with that.

>
 Luke smiled, shaking his head. Those kids always did take what
he
>said to heart. He looked back at Laura who was holding the picture
close
against her chest.
>
Laura: And the cake sure came out right, just the way she
wanted....Oh God,
>Luke...I miss her...I miss her so much.

> Luke nodded, pulling Laura close to him, as her emotions overtook
her.

>Luke: I do, too, darlin'...I do, too.

> Laura pulled back from him, wiping at her soaked cheeks. She shook

her head.
>
Laura: If only I hadn't called Liz that day, she never would
have looked
>away.

> Luke shook his head, touching Laura's face so that she looked up at

him.
>
Luke: Laura, don't do that. Don't blame yourself for this. You
had no way of
>knowing this would happen.

> Laura nodded, knowing that her guilt was unnecessary. Still, she

couldn't help thinking that she had somehow provided the access
the kidnapper
>had been waiting for. Luke continued, his words harsh, yet calm.

>Luke: It's no ones fault but the bastard who did this...The bastard
that I
will make pay, even if it takes me the rest of my life.

>
 Laura shook her head, not willing to think of what her husband
would
>do. She was about to respond, when they heard a voice at their
doorway.

>Lulu: What are you talking about, Dad? What bas...well you know what
you said.

> Luke and Laura stared at their daughter. She had gotten home late

last night from her school trip to D.C. They felt it better to
wait until the
>morning to tell her what had happened. They smiled at her, beckoning
her
into their room. Her eyes were full of concern and worry.

Growing up as a
>Spencer, she'd become accustomed to bad news. And she knew that this was
that kind of news. Luke and Laura studied their daughter. She was sixteen
>years old, almost seventeen and strikingly beautiful. She had shoulder
length dark hair that had a shine that was unmatched, blue piercing eyes,
>like Lucky, and skin more fair than new fallen snow. And she was tall and
thin...everything fit to proclaim her supermodel beautiful. But it was her
>heart that was most attractive. She had a caring, kind, sensitive one. She
could be stubborn like any other Spencer and was, at times, the cleverest of
>them all. And right now she knew something was wrong. Lulu, as she had
never outgrown that name, was the godmother of Lexi. She was entrusted with
>the honor at just ten years old. But she was mature and wanted the
responsibility. Lucky and Liz couldn't think of anyone better for their
>little girl. And they had been right...Lulu had a fierce, devoted love for
that child...This would surely hit her hard.
>
 Lulu sat down on her parents' bed, studying them and internally

>bracing herself.

>Lulu: Well?

> Luke swallowed hard and began softly.

>Luke: Sweetie, a couple of days ago something happened to Lexi. She was-

> Lulu immediately covered her mouth, tears already falling. She
interrupted her father through her fingers.
>
Lulu: Is she okay?...What happened to her?
>
 Laura reached out and gently touched her daughter's arm. Luke

>continued...

>Luke: Darlin' she was playing in her backyard when she was kidnapped. We
don't know where she is. Lucky is delivering ransom tonight, hopefully that
>will give us a lead.

> Lulu looked down, trying to take it all in. She looked back up into
her parents' eyes, her own clouded by so many emotions.

>
Lulu: How could this have happened?! She must be so scared! Oh God..Lexi!
>Why..why didn't you call me?

>Laura: We didn't want to worry you in case they found her. I'm sorry if we
did the wrong thing, but we thought it was for the best.

>
 Lulu nodded and responded solemnly.
>
Lulu: Lucky and Elizabeth must be going out of their minds...(whispering) Oh
>God...Keep her safe...Please.

> Lulu fell into the arms of her parents, as she continued to cry for
her goddaughter...For the little girl who had touched many a life in a
>wonderful way.
:::::::::::
> The morning passed quickly, Luke, Laura and Lulu spending it at Lucky
and Liz's. Most of the day was spent just waiting. Kendall, Waters and
>Taggart checked the money, as the time for Lucky to leave neared. It was
soon quarter of 3 and Lucky was ready to go. He looked at

Elizabeth and
>Lorenzo.

>Liz: Please be careful, Lucky...This could be a set up.

> Lucky smiled and kissed Elizabeth softly.

>Lucky: I know, baby. I will be.

> Lucky looked at Lorenzo, who was had laid his head on Liz's
shoulder.

>Lorenzo: Where are you going, Daddy?...Me come?

> Lucky shook his head, touching his son's cheek.

>Lucky: Not this time, Cowboy. You stay here and take care of your
mom, okay?
Will you do that for me?
>
 Lorenzo nodded, smiling.
>
Lucky: That's my boy. I'll be home soon.
>
 Lucky kissed Liz once more and Lorenzo on the cheek. His mother
and
>sister hugged him, wishing him luck and safety. His father and
Taggart
followed him to the door.
>
Taggart: Okay, now just leave the suitcase at a table outside of
Kelly's like
>the note said. Then leave. Got that?

>Lucky: Yeah, I got it.

> Taggart walked away, leaving father and son alone. Luke looked into

his son's eyes, his entire demeanor serious.
>
Luke: Be careful, son. I know this is hard and it makes you want
to do crazy
>things, but resist. Don't do anything you're not supposed to. And if
you
feel the urge to, think of that little girl who adores you,
think of the
>woman and little boy in that kitchen who feel the same as she does.
Don't
let your guard down...Trust your instincts...Go with your
gut.
>
 Luke pulled Lucky to him in a hug and then pulled back,
slapping him
>on the shoulder as he did so.

>Luke: Now go do what you have to do.

> Lucky smiled, nodded and then left the house. Luke watched his son,

hoping he'd be kept safe. He smiled, raising his head up to face
the ceiling
>and pointed a finger, saying...

>Luke: Okay, if you really do exist then this is the time to show
it...Start
doing your job.
>::::::::::
 Helena Cassadine sat on her yacht, gently tapping her
fingernails
>against the wood of her desk. She shouted for Ari.

>Helena: Ari! Get in here!

> Ari hurriedly came through the door and stood erect at her
desk.

>Ari: Yes, Madame?...What is that I can do for you?

> Helena shook her head, grinning. Ari was such a fool...Such a weak,

ignorant fool. He was just like Stefan. Yes, Stefan believed
himself strong
>enough to stand up to her every so often, but she could always see
the fear
in his eyes. He was no match for her...never was, never
would be.
>Ahhh...but Luke Spencer was. He was the worthiest of opponents:
Clever,
strong, charming, intelligent and unafraid. And Helena
had grown quite
>bored. Lately, she had a lack of...shall we say...activity. None of
her
adversaries had been up to par. She could too easily overtake
them. No,

>only one man would do...She had left him and his family alone for far too
long.

>
Helena: Have you checked on matters? Is everything going accordingly?

>
Ari swallowed hard and nodded.

>
ArI: Yes, Madame, I think everything is proceeding as you wish.

>
 Helena shook a thin, bony finger at him. Her lips were thin and

>menacing, as her eyes bore holes into him.

>Helena: You think? Ari, I do not pay you to think! I pay you to do what I
ask and tell me without a doubt that everything is under control! Now I will

>ask you again: Have you checked on matters? Is everything going accordingly?

> Ari wrung his hands, his palms dripping with sweat. He searched for
his voice and managed to find something that would do.

>
Ari: Yes, Madame. Everything is proceeding as you wish.

>
 Helena grinned and nodded.

>
Helena: Splendid...You are dismissed.

>
 Ari quickly left and Helena let her smile widen, as she brought her

>fingers to her temple. She whispered softly, her words cold.

>Helena: Well, Luke, it seems our business will never be finished...That is
until I emerge as the victor...Once and for all...And maybe that time has

>finally arrived.
:::~::~:

> Lucky slowly drove up on the street across from Kelly's and parked
his car. He was a few minutes early, so he stayed in his car and surveyed the

>area. His Spencer instincts were in full gear. He let his eyes wander the
sidewalks and street, looking for anything remotely suspicious. There was a

>woman walking with a little boy, on the sidewalk opposite him. The boy was
about Lorenzo's age and was skipping happily along. There were a few other

>cars parked along the street, but no one occupied them. He had just decided
that everything looked ordinary, when a man caught his eye. He was in a dark

>suit, wearing dark sunglasses, Lucky noticed as he turned his head. But it
wasn't so much the man who had caught his eye, but rather his companion. They

>were on the same side of the street as he was, walking on the sidewalk, their
backs turned to him. His companion was a little girl, holding gingerly to

>his hand. His breath caught in his chest when he saw her. She was the right
height and had the right hair color. "Could it really be her? Could it be

>Lexi? Why would she be so close to the drop area? Were they just moving her
to another location and I surprised them by arriving early?" Lucky shook his

>head, knowing no answers to his questions. All he knew is that his little
girl could be mere yards away from him. He could have her back in his arm

>within minutes. He had to check...he had to see if it was her. He quickly
opened his door and got out of the car. His strides were long as he tried to

>catch up with the man and girl. He felt as if he wasn't moving at

all, but,
in reality, he was almost sprinting. His head began to spin and his heart
>beat loudly in his chest. He shook his head, as Lexi's laughter filled his
ears. He had to reach her. His feet hit the ground faster and faster. It
>seemed he was catching up with them. He finally got just a few feet behind
them and slowed his sprint to a walk. He allowed his strides to widen, took a
>deep breath and then reached forward touching the girl's shoulder and saying
with unabated hope...
>
Lucky: Lexi?! Sweetie, is that you?!
>
 The little girl felt the man's hand on her shoulder and quickly

>whipped her head around to look at him. She surveyed him, no recognition
crossing her face. The man turned at the same moment and pushed Lucky away.
>Lucky was frozen, his eyes studying the little girl...the little girl who
wasn't his own. He felt like he'd lost her for a second time. He had been
>so hopeful, but in one-second his world was back to its original bleak form.
He shook his head and managed to say...
>
Lucky: I'm sorry...I...I thought you were my daughter.
>
 The little girl looked at him strangely, almost sympathetically. The
>man touched her shoulder and lead her away. Lucky could have fallen to his
knees right then, in the middle of the sidewalk. She wasn't his daughter
>and he felt like he'd just lost his only chance. He shook his head again,
trying to clear his head. He ran a hand through his hair, remembering the
>task at hand. He hurriedly walked back to his car, removed the suitcase and
then began the walk to Kelly's. His eyes were constantly roaming, looking for
>suspicious characters. He finally stopped outside of Kelly's. The tables
outside were unoccupied. He looked at his watch, seeing that it read 3 pm.
>He was sure that he was being watched. They were probably watching him to
make sure no police were involved and that he followed all directions. He
>slowly lay the suitcase on a table closest to the entrance to the restaurant.
He felt like he should do more. He wanted to hide and wait for the person
>to come pick it up. But he knew he couldn't. They had to be watching and a
move like that would spell danger for Lexi. He placed his hands in his
>pockets and casually strolled away. He made it back to his car, let the
breath he'd been holding out and proceeded home.
>
 A few minutes later, a man arrived outside of Kelly's. He was clothed
>all in black and his eyes darted around nervously. He spotted the suitcase,
grinned slightly and picked it up. Then he continued walking past Kelly's.
>::::::::::
 Meanwhile at Lucky and Liz's, Taggart had picked up the tracing
>device. He motioned Mac, Kendall and Waters over.
>Taggart: He's moving, sir.
>Mac: Good, now we wait. We have men stationed all over town, ready to move
once he stays in one location for a while. We have to move fast. Most likely
>he's just stopping to transfer the money into another bag. We don't

want to
lose him.

>
 They all watched the target move along the map of the city.

First it

>had headed west, then north, then west again.

> Lucky came in the door, just as the target seemed to have stopped

moving. Elizabeth smiled as he came in and got up to hug him.

>
Liz: Thank God you're okay.

>
 Lucky smiled and squeezed her tightly. Then he went into his office

>and stood behind the police.

>Lucky: He picked it up.

>Taggart: Yes and it seems he has stopped. Sir, I think we should move in.

> Mac nodded. The target had been stationary for almost five minutes.

>Lucky: Where is he?

> Mac ignored Lucky and gave his orders.

>Mac: Okay, tell our men to move.

> Taggart moved to the other side of the room, talking into his cell

phone.

>
Lucky: Mac, tell me where he is.

>
 Mac only shook his head.

>
Mac: Lucky, let us do our job.

>
 Something had come over Lucky. He needed to be involved in this. He

>needed to see the asshole who was somehow involved in his daughter's

kidnapping. He quickly studied the lighted map. It had no marked locations,

>but Lucky knew this city like the back of his hand. He knew where the man

was and he knew he could get there before the police could. Lucky turned on

>his heel, ready to leave the room, but Mac grabbed his arm.

>Mac: Don't, Lucky.

> Lucky pulled free of Mac's grip and looked at him, his eyes hard with

determination.

>
Lucky: You can't stop me...She's my daughter.

>
 Lucky quickly left the room and blew past all of his family, leaving

>them to wonder where he was going. He got into his car and headed to the

location.

>::::::::::
 Five minutes later, he had arrived. He was right, the police weren't

>there yet. He was at the catacombs, the place where he and Sly used to hide.
 He knew those catacombs better than anyone, surely better than the police

>did. He could get to him first. He opened his glove compartment and pulled

out a flashlight. He had no weapon, so he'd have to rely on his hands and

>his smarts. He got out of his car and slowly headed toward the catacombs. He

entered their darkness, flipped the flashlight on and allowed it to guide

>him. His eyes and senses were in peak condition, as he roamed the catacombs.
 He heard nothing, it was a silent tomb. His trail was an impossible maze of

>turns...But then he saw it...A soft glow coming from his next turn. It

looked to be that of a lantern. He pressed himself up against the hard stone

>and inched his way closer to the light. He stopped when he saw the

figure.
The man had his back to him and he seemed to be searching the suitcase. Lucky
>quietly came forward, until he was just a few feet behind him. The man must
have sensed his presence because he suddenly turned around. Lucky didn't
>recognize him, but immediately reacted. The man raised his arm to punch him,
but Lucky quickly and effortlessly blocked it. This took the man by surprise
>and allowed Lucky to bring his own fist up for a punch. His fist connected
with the man's jaw, sending him to the ground. The man rubbed at his jaw,
>visibly shaken by the punch. Lucky could feel the anger and rage overtaking
him. This man had something to do with his daughter's kidnapping...and he
>would have to pay. Lucky stood over him, grabbed him by the collar and
pulled him to his feet. He could see fear in the man's eyes, as he slammed
>him up against the stone. He whispered into his face, his breath touching
the man's cheek.
>
Lucky: Where is she?...Where is my daughter?
>
The man didn't respond and he tried to struggle free. But Lucky was
>too strong and he pinned him against the wall. His voice emerged loudly from
his mouth, anger lacing it.
>
Lucky: Where is she!....Damnit! Tell me where the hell my daughter is, you
>bastard!

>The man smiled slightly and whispered...

>Man: You'll never know.

>Lucky fumed. He slammed the man against the wall, his head hitting it
slightly. Then Lucky brought his fist up and pummeled his mouth, leaving his
>lower lip bleeding profusely.

>Lucky: The hell I won't!...Who are you?!...Do you work for someone?!...Are
they paying you to do this or are you just some sick bastard who preys on
>children?!

>The man shook his head, almost surprised that Lucky would think such
a thing.
>
Man: I only picked up the money...Look, man, I had orders. I followed them.
>
Lucky's eyes narrowed and he pulled the man closer to him.

>
Lucky: Orders from who?!
>
The man only shook his head. Lucky licked his lips and responded.
>
Lucky: Damnit! Tell me...They don't give a damn about you! The police are
>going to throw your sorry ass in jail in no more than five minutes. You'll
be an accessory, while your employer will be sitting pretty, nothing having
>touched him or her. You're going to jail for a long time and the only thing
that can help you now is cooperation. It'll get you less jail time...So
>what's it going to be?

>The man seemed to be thinking this this carefully over, knowing Lucky
was entirely correct. He replied quietly.
>
Man: When I get out, I'll be killed by my employer.
>
Lucky leaned in close to him, his whisper as cold as ice.

>
Lucky: If you don't help me now, then they won't have to...I'll do it for
>them...Right here...Right now...The choice is yours.

> The man's eyes grew wide in fear and he nodded his head.

>Man: Okay, okay. I'll talk.

> Lucky backed up slightly and waited for the man to speak. He touched
his bleeding lip and then looked up at Lucky, responding softly...
>
Man: My employer is Cesar Faison.
>
 Lucky's eyes widened in shock at the man's revelation.
>

>. . . . Chapter 8

> Lucky's mind was racing. "Faison? Was this some sick sequel to
Lucky's kidnapping all those years ago?...Was this history repeating itself?"...But one thought stood out among all the others. "If this is the
work of Faison, then we may never see Lexi again...He could be anywhere on
>earth, no one has known of his whereabouts for twelve years now."
Lucky
looked directly into the man's eyes, pinning his shoulder with his hand. He
>spoke through clenched teeth, despite barely in check emotions.

>Lucky: Do you know where Faison is? Do you have any idea?

> The man only shook his head, squirming as he did so.

>Man: No, man. I do these things all of the time. He called me and told me
what to do. I don't even know how he knew of me, he probably just heard of my
>work. That's all I know. I was supposed to transfer the money into that bag
and leave it underneath the docks. But he'll know what happened now, no one
>we'll show up there.

> Lucky stepped back and ran a hand through his hair. He looked up when
he heard voices. It was the police. They had finally made their way to the
>location. Some officers walked in, followed by Taggart and Mac. Mac looked
at the man and shook his head. Lucky had done a number on him.
>
Mac: Okay, read him his rights and 'cuff him...Lucky, thanks for leaving him
>still breathing.

> Lucky shook his head and looked at Mac.

>Lucky: He's not the one I want dead.

> Mac stepped forward, touching Lucky's shoulder.

>Mac: Lucky, acting this way is not going to get Lexi back.

> Lucky smirked and nodded his head in the man's direction.

>Lucky: He talked. He told me who his employer is.

> Mac's eyes widened and he nodded. He knew that this man was not the
one they wanted, he only hoped that he could lead him to the real perpetrator
>and Lexi in the process.

>Mac: Okay, what did he say?

> Lucky licked his lips and began.

>Lucky: He's working for Faison. He swears he has no idea where he is though.
This ransom was just a cover. He wanted to throw suspicion away from him.
>
 Mac nodded. Faison was a man he hated deep down in his soul. He had

>killed his brother and sister-in-law. After Lucky had returned and told his
story, Mac swore that Faison wouldn't live to see another day. But he was
>too late. Faison had disappeared after Lucky escaped and they hadn't heard
from him since. Mac wondered why he had decided to resurface now.
>
Mac: That guy will have to give us an official statement and he'll get a
>reduced sentence because of his cooperation...Okay, well this is something.

> Lucky shook his head and looked at Mac. His eyes were masked in tears
and his voice roared from his throat.
>
Lucky: It's nothing, Mac!...Don't you see!..We have no idea where Faison
>is!...And he is the master at covering his trail!...This is nothing!...And
this doesn't lead me one step closer to my little girl!
>
 Mac reached his hand out to touch Lucky's shoulder again, but Lucky
>backed up and shook his head.

>Mac: Lucky, I want him just as much as you do. And I want to put that little
girl back in the arms of her parents. But I can't do that yet and it doesn't
>mean this is over. This is something, whether you want to believe it or not.
We will find her...I give you my word.
>
 Lucky only lowered his head and whispered...
>
Lucky: I hope your word is good enough.
>
 With that he walked out of the catacombs and to his car.

>::::::::::
 Luke, Laura, Lulu and Liz were going crazy with worry about Lucky.
>When Mac had left he told them where Lucky had gone. They all prayed that he
wasn't injured and that he didn't take his grief any further. Suddenly, they
>all lifted their heads, when they heard Lucky's footsteps enter the living
room. They all breathed a collective sigh of relief. Elizabeth got up and
>fell into his arms. Lucky could hear her weeping softly.

>Liz: You shouldn't have done that, Lucky!..You could have been killed!...I..I
can't lose you, too!
>
 Lucky pulled back and cupped Elizabeth's face in his hands. He spoke
>softly to her.

>Lucky: Baby, I'm fine...It was something I had to do...I'm alright, you
didn't lose me.
>
 Elizabeth nodded and kissed him lightly. Lucky and Elizabeth sat down
>on the couch, as Lucky prepared to tell them what he had learned. He looked
at his father as he spoke.
>
Lucky: It's Faison. That's what the man said who picked up the money. He has
>no idea where he is though.

> Luke shook his head and slammed his fist down on the coffee table,
shattering a delicate blown glass figurine.
>
Luke: Damn him!...He did it again!...First, he made me believe that my son is
>dead and now he's stolen my granddaughter!..Damn him to hell!... I swear he
will pay..If it's the last thing I do!..He's screwed with my family for the
>last time!

> Laura touched Luke's hand, telling him to calm down. Lucky licked

his lips, staring at his father.
>
Lucky: We don't know where he is, Dad...There's nothing we can
do.
>
 Luke shook his head, standing up.
>
Luke: The hell there isn't...I think I'll pay his former partner
in crime a
>little visit.

> With that, Luke stalked out of the house.
:::::::::::
> Sonny rubbed at his face. The stubble on his face was bothering
him,
but he didn't care to do anything to remove it. He had more
important
>business to take care of. He swirled his glass of wine around and
lifted
himself up off the couch. He had spent hours at the
hospital with Hannah.
>The doctor said that she had been steadily improving and it looked
as if she
would make a full recovery. But Sonny knew what could
have happened, he knew
>what Moreno had intended to happen to her...and now he knew what he
had to
do. He heard a knock at the door and lifted his head as
Jason walked in.
>
Sonny: Johnny, pull the car around. I'll be leaving in a few
minutes.
>
 Johnny nodded and closed the door. Jason stood in front of him,
hands
>on his hips, face as hard as stone.

>Jason: Don't do this, Sonny.

> Sonny shook his head and placed the glass down on the table.

>Sonny: I have to.

> Jason shook his head, taking a step forward.

>Jason: No, you don't. If you want Moreno taken care of, then fine,
let our
men do it. You don't want his blood on your hands.

>
 Sonny sucked at his teeth, smirking.
>
Sonny: Yes, I do. He made this personal. If he took Lexi, then I
am going
>to find out where the hell she is. And even if he didn't, he's still
going
down. I am going to make him pay for what he's done to the
people I love...to
>Hannah. I am going to do this one...His men will retaliate and I'll
deal
with that. But this is going to end with me.
>
 Jason only shook his head in defeat. Sonny knew what he wanted
and he
>wasn't going to be dissuaded. Sonny took out his gun and checked it.
Then he
placed it back in place.
>
Sonny: Go some place public...This doesn't have to touch you.

>
Jason: I don't care about that...Just be careful.
>
 Sonny nodded, patted Jason's shoulder and walked out the door.
As he
>closed the door behind him, only one thing shone in his eyes:
Payback.
:::::::::::
> Luke had decided to go to his club first to clear his head. He
didn't
want to blow it with Helena. If she was involved, then he
would be able to
>tell by looking into her eyes. He could read her like that. Her
words never
meant anything to him. She could lie through her
teeth, but he'd know. She
>could fool the pope, but she couldn't fool him. If she was involved

or had
any idea where Faison was, then he would leave knowing the information. Luke
>went to unlock the door, but found it already open. They weren't open today,
since Luke had decided to close under the circumstances. And he knew that he
>had locked that door. He slowly, cautiously entered the club. His eyes
scanned the room, seeing no one and nothing but the damage they had done.
>Luke ran a hand through his hair and shook his head. The place had been
demolished. Tables and chairs were broken. Glasses and bottles were
>shattered, their remains scattered on the floor. And there were bullet
holes...everywhere. The walls were covered with them and nothing was left
>untouched. Except for one thing...one thing that had purposely been left
unmarred. Luke stepped forward, looking at it. It was the portrait of
>Helena. He had hung the damn thing up more than twelve years ago and it was
still up. He left it there as a reminder...a reminder of all that Helena had
>done to his family...and all that he would eventually make her pay for. And
now she had left him a sign...a sign of things to come. She had left her
>mark, he would know that it was her and that the games were about to begin.
Luke shook his head and muttered at her portrait.

>
Luke: Not this time, Helena...If you have anything to do with Lexi's
>disappearance, then you'll have to play this game from the grave.

> Luke grinned, turned on his heel and left the restaurant.
:::~::~
> Laura, Liz, Lulu and Lucky all sat on the couch, trying to take their
minds off of what Luke was doing. Lulu grabbed the remote and turned the
>television on. The local 5:00 evening news was just coming on. Their mouths
hung open at what they saw on the screen. The words "Top Story: Girl
>missing." were beneath a picture of Lexi. It then cut away to a picture of
Lucky and Elizabeth. Next a woman appeared on screen. They all listened as
>the woman spoke.

>Newswoman: We have just learned that the six year old daughter of Elizabeth
and Lucky Spencer, Lexi, was reported missing a few days ago. No further
>details are known. Elizabeth Spencer is a prominent local artist and manager
of a prestigious art gallery. Lucky Spencer is known worldwide as a singer, a
>profession which has brought him considerable wealth and fame for a decade
now. It is not known who the police's prime suspects are at this time. They
>do ask that anyone with any information regarding this case please contact
them.
>
 Lucky shook his head and flipped the television off. He wondered how
>the story had broke. He guessed that there was a leak in the investigation
and that the police had then reluctantly asked for the public's help.
>Taggart walked in at that moment and they all looked at him.

>Taggart: From the looks of it, you've heard. Someone leaked the information
and we had to give a number for information. The calls are being taken here.

> Since we believe the kidnapper is Faison, it's not likely that these calls
will bring us any information. But they're worth checking out. Now in a few

>minutes, your phone and doorbell are going to be ringing like crazy. The
media is going to be circling. Just tell them "no comment" or something to

>that effect.

> Lucky and Elizabeth nodded, as Taggart left the room. Elizabeth
shook her head.

>
Liz: I can't believe my baby's face was flashed all over TV for everyone to

>see...It makes it all seem even more real...Like this nightmare has taken on
a life of its own.

> Lucky nodded and comfortingly patted Elizabeth's hand. Just then the
doorbell rang. Lucky took a deep breath and grasped Elizabeth's hand in his.

>They walked to the door and opened it up. They were greeted with a barage of
flashes of light and questions. There were already too many reporters outside

>their home to even count. Some held pads, others microphones and cameras were
stationed through out them. Lucky and Elizabeth looked at their hungry

>faces, eager for a juicy story. Most didn't really care about the people
behind the story, about the little girl behind it. They wanted a story to

>lead their newcasts with, a story to dominate headlines and front pages.
Their questions were flying faster than Lucky and Elizabeth could even hear.

>Lucky waved his hands and they quieted considerably. He licked his lips and
then spoke.

>
Lucky: We would just like to ask that you respect our privacy at this time

>and allow us to deal with our grief. We only want our daughter back safe and
sound. Other than that, we have no comment. Thank you.

>
 Lucky knew that was a little more than "no comment", but he had to

>say it. He was just about to close the door, when one question rang out,
blocking his ears to all others.

>
Man: Mr. Spencer, are you and your wife considered suspects?

>
 Lucky eyes darted to the man and he bore holes into his head.

>Elizabeth watched her husband's eyes narrow and his jaw clench. She could
tell he was going to lose it. She tried to pull him away from the door, but

>he wouldn't budge. He spoke, his voice laced with outrage.

>Lucky: How can you even ask that?!...She's our daughter and these last few
days without her have been hell!..How dare you!

>
 The man pointed his pen at him.

>
Man: Mr. Spencer, it is common procedure to suspect and investigate the

>parents first in the disappearance of a child. Ever since the Susan Smith
case all of those years ago, no one is above suspicion.

>
 Lucky only shook his head, the man's explanation providing him

no

>comfort.

>Lucky: I don't care about what other parents have done...I am telling you
that our daughter was stolen from us!...The child we love more than life

>itself is God knows where because a sick person couldn't control himself!

> Lucky looked down, his chest heaving up and down. When he looked back
up, his eyes were filled with tears ready to fall. He looked at the man and

>said softly...

>Lucky: Are you a father?...Do you have a child?

> The man shook his head, indicating he was not. Lucky blinked back
tears and ran a hand through his hair. His voice was choked with immense

>emotion as he continued, his eyes looking directly at the man.

>Lucky: Then you can't know...You can't understand what it's like to love a
child from the moment she was a distant reality...To do all that you can to

>protect that child from harm...To sit up nights praying that you're doing
your best as a father, that your not failing the one person who adores you

>more than anyone else....To worry about that child every minute of every
day....And you can't know what it's like to have her vanish...To have your

>whole world come crashing down, your worst fears realized....You can't know
what we've felt for our daughter for more than six years...and you can't know

>how we feel now....We only want her back...Safe and sound.

> Elizabeth held tightly onto her husband's hand, she was so proud of
him. He lowered his head and then lifted it back up to face them. He said

>softly...

>Lucky: If a quote was what you wanted, then you've got it. You can quote me
on all of it...I meant every word.

>
 With that, Lucky shut the door. Elizabeth smiled at him and pulled

>him into her arms.

>Liz: I am so proud of you. You said all that I would have wanted to say.

> Lucky smiled and pulled back. Tears were running down both of their
cheeks, as Lucky whispered...

>
Lucky: She's our daughter and we have always loved her...I won't let anyone

>think otherwise.

> Elizabeth nodded and kissed him softly.
::::::::::

> Sonny made his way into Moreno's office. He had easily slipped by
his men. He opened the door, slipped in and then slammed it shut. Moreno was

>sitting in his chair and his back was turned to him. When he heard the door
slam, he quickly turned around, startled at who he saw. He tried to recover

>quickly, but Sonny saw the fear in his eyes. He smirked.

>Sonny: Surprised to see me?

> Moreno, Jr. shook his head.

>Moreno: No, I knew you wouldn't let my message go unanswered.

> Sonny smiled slyly and quickly drew his gun. It had a silencer

attached to it, so no one would be the wiser for a little while.
Moreno was
>stunned and backed up in his chair slightly.

>Sonny: That's right...I've come to answer you in person.

> Sonny could practically see Moreno shaking. He was new in this

business, still young. He didn't have the experience and
intelligence that
>Sonny had. He hadn't suffered the kind of losses that Sonny had. He
hadn't
experienced all that had made Sonny so hard and
numb...Everything that would
>make him capable of what he was about to do...Everything that had
pushed him
one step too far this time.
>
Moreno: What do you want?
>
 Sonny smiled and tilted his head.
>
Sonny: Answers...and then you dead.
>
 Moreno swallowed hard and shook his head.
>
Moreno: You don't have to do this. I'll answer your questions
and then I'll
>leave you and your family alone. Just don't do this.

> Sonny shrugged and responded. Maybe he was more likely to get a

straight answer if Moreno didn't think he was about to die.

>
Sonny: Okay, fine.
>
 Moreno breathed a sigh of relief and Sonny continued.

>
Sonny: Did you have anything to do with Lexi Spencer's
kidnapping?
>
 Moreno's eyes widened and he vigorously shook his head.

>
Moreno: No!...I didn't even know she was missing!
>
 Sonny studied him. Moreno seemed to be telling the truth.

>
Sonny: So the note, saying it wasn't the beginning, you weren't
referring to
>Lexi?

> Moreno shook his head and replied bitterly.

>Moreno: No, the beginning was when you killed my father....When my
father
died at the hands of you.
>
 Sonny's eyes were hard and his voice cold as he looked at
Moreno, Jr.
>
Sonny: You tried to kill my wife. You almost did and you will
try again.
>I've suffered too much loss already to take anymore chances that it
could
happen again. You have to live with your choices, I have to
live with mine.
>
 Moreno's eyes grew wide and fear overtook every inch of his
body, as
>Sonny undid the safety and pointed the gun at his chest. Sonny's
mind wasn't
thinking of what he was about to do...He didn't care.
He knew he had to do
>it and all the faces that had died because of him, ran through his
mind as he
began to pull the trigger. Wrong and right were no
longer choices to him,
>their lines had become blurred long ago. And now he felt that he had
only
one choice left. His voice was colder than ice and his eyes
were harder than
>stone, as he whispered while at the same time pulling the
trigger....

>Sonny: Like father, like son.

> Moreno's eyes barely registered the brain-numbing fear, before the

bullet left the gun and pierced his chest. Then three more following suit.
>His voice didn't utter a word, not even a cry. And now his body lay dead,
filled with bullets and saturated with blood.
>
 The man who had taken his life slowly lowered the gun, his eyes

>showing no sign of remorse or sorrow...And then he realized one thing about
himself for the very first time: He was no longer capable of either.
>
 He was a broken man...and he felt nothing as he left the scene of his
>crime.
:::~::~

> Helena Cassadine sat at her desk on her yacht, when Luke Spencer
casually strolled in. He plopped down on the chair across from her and
>propped his feet up on her desk. Helena smiled at him and Luke grinned back.

>Luke: You know you should really train those things you call guards a little
better...It was far too easy to invade your humble abode.

>
 Helena only grinned and leaned forward.
>
Helena: My dear, Luke, now to what do I owe this pleasure? Two handsome
>Spencer men come visit me in a matter of days, I must be one fortunate woman.

> Luke shook his head and leaned closer to Helena, removing his feet
from her desk.

>
Luke: Oh I wouldn't call you fortunate right about now...By the way, I love
>what you did with my place.

> Helena smirked and nodded.

>Helena: I am glad you approve.

> Luke nodded and smiled.

>Luke: But that ain't why I'm here. I should have killed you long ago,
Helena, and one day I will have the pleasure. But I have to wait for the
>right moment for that. Yes, nothing but the best for my favorite psychotic
little witch.
>
 Helena nodded.

>
Helena: Oh Luke, you know you can never murder me. I am your best opponent.
>
 Luke shook his head and leaned forward to her, his whisper harsh.

>
Luke: This isn't a game, Helena. Not this time. If you want to go head to
>head with me, then fine. But after I take care of business....Now, did you
have anything at all to do with the disappearance of my granddaughter?

>
 Helena's smile vanished and she shook her head.
>
Helena: Luke, this is not my doing. I assure you of that. After my last

>attempt at kidnapping ended as it did, I swore off of them. No, my fun with
you was just about to begin.
>
 Luke studied her. She wasn't lying, he could see it in her eyes.

>This wasn't her doing.

>Luke: Fine then. Now do you have any idea where your former partner Cesar
Faison, a psycho after your own heart, is right now?

>
 Helena only shook her head and smiled, her lips spreading thin.

She

>leaned over her desk and whispered into Luke's face...

>Helena: My dear, he is one place and one place only...six feet under. I
know because I put him there. He had to pay for his incompetence regarding

>Lucky's escape...And pay he did.

> Luke sat there in complete shock, not knowing where to turn next.

>

>
. . . . Chapter 9

>
 Luke ran a hand down his face and blew a breath of air out of his

>mouth. He shook his head and leaned his elbows on Helena's desk.

>Luke: Do you mean to tell me that Faison is dancing with the devil?

> A slow smile crept across Helena's lips as she nodded.

>Helena: If you mean to say that he is no longer among the living then you are
correct.

>
 Luke laughed.

>
Luke: You must have a one strike policy. Well, if it wasn't Faison, then do

>you have any idea who the kidnapper is?

> Helena shook her head, smiling.

>Helena: I assure you I do not.

> Luke nodded and lifted himself out of his chair. He smiled down at
Helena.

>
Luke: Well, babe, it was nice talking to you. Once I get my granddaughter

>back, I would be happy to resume this little game of yours. You know I never
tire of you as my opponent.

>
 Helena smiled and nodded, her hands clasped below her chin.

>
Helena: And I can think of none better than you, my dear.

>
 Luke threw Helena a wink, before disappearing out the door.

>
:::~::~

>
 Luke rubbed at his temples, as he approached his office at the club.

>If it wasn't Faison, then who the hell was it? And why had this guy told
Lucky that it was him? Luke could only guess that it was another decoy to

>throw suspicion onto someone else and away from the real perpetrator. He
sighed and entered his office. He was surprised to see his longtime partner

>and friend sitting at the chair across from his desk. He was about to greet
him, when he noticed the look of absolute blankness on his face. Luke sat

>down, his eyes never leaving Sonny's figure.

>Luke: Sonny, what happened?...Is it Hannah?...Did her condition worsen?

> Sonny shook his head, his eyes staring at a spot on the wall behind
Luke. He answered, his voice emotionless.

>
Sonny: No...She's going to be fine.

>
 Luke's brow raised and he smiled slightly.

>
Luke: Partner, then I am stumped. What's got you acting like this?

>
 Sonny ran a hand down his face and squeezed his eyes tightly shut.

>
Sonny: I took care of him. Moreno Jr...He's no longer an issue and he had

>nothing to do with Lexi's kidnapping.

> Luke eyes widened and he nodded, crossing his arms over his chest.

>Luke: I see. So your men disposed of him as they did his father.

> Sonny shook his head, his eyes connecting with Luke's for the first
time.

>
Sonny: No, I did it.

>
 Luke's eye widened even more at Sonny's confession. As far as Luke

>knew, Sonny had never taken someone's life. It was always by his orders, but
never at his hands. He had never done the actual deed. Luke had though.

>Luke knew the guilt and emptiness that came with ending someone's life, no
matter how necessary, no matter what the situation. It was never easy. It

>was never right. It was just done. But as Luke looked at Sonny, he saw none
of what he had always felt. The remorse, sorrow and guilt, no matter how

>small. They were absent from Sonny's eyes...as was everything else.

>Luke: Why didn't you have your men take care of him?

>Sonny: I couldn't. I couldn't stand others being held responsible for my
business any more. He made this personal and I ended it.

>
 Luke looked down and then brought his eyes up to Sonny's.

>
Luke: You didn't end it, Sonny, it's just begun for you.

Taggart's going to

>be knocking down your door faster than you can say "murder one".

What are
you going to do?

>
 Sonny only shook his head, rubbing at his chin.

>
Sonny: It doesn't matter. Nothing matters anymore.

>
Luke: What the hell are you talking about? You have a son and wife that need

>you! They matter! Did you think about them, Sonny, before you pulled the
trigger?!

>
 Sonny's eyes suddenly flared and he stood up.

>
Sonny: They were all I thought about! And every other innocent person that

>has made the mistake of knowing me! Every person who has almost died or has
died because of me! Don't you see! I am always left standing! I do the

>crimes and others pay!...Well, now it's over. I should have gone to jail
long ago and now it's the only thing that will protect the people I

>love....They don't deserve all that comes with me and I sure as hell never
deserved them.

>
 Luke shook his head and stood up. He walked around his desk and stood

>before Sonny.

>Luke: That's a load of crap and you know it, Sonny. You're giving up all
that you care for. You can fight this and you'd probably get off. Are you

>really willing to lose it all? Do you remember back when Laura and I were
going to get a divorce? You said that you always admired

what I had. That I
>had a family and had managed to break free of the mob. Sonny you can
do it,
too. Take your family, move to Timbukto. Do whatever the
hell you have to
>do, just don't lose them. You will regret it if you do, I can
promise you
that. You've suffered loss, you know how it can tear
you apart. And I am
>going through it again right now. Don't bring this on yourself.
Don't lose
them because you can't stand the world you've become a
part of.
>
 Sonny looked down, tears blurring his vision. He lifted his
head back
>up and looked into Luke's pleading eyes. His voice was as broken as
his soul
and spirit.
>
Sonny: That's where you're wrong. This world has become a part
of me...and I
>can't rid myself of it. I don't feel a damn thing right now. I don't
feel
sorry, I don't feel guilty, I don't feel sad. I stood in a
room and watched
>a man beg for his life. I watched the fear fill his eyes and I
couldn't have
cared less. I pulled that trigger and watched his
life seep from his body. I
>watched him die...and felt myself dying at the very same moment. For
years,
I have been hanging on by a thread and today it finally
broke. I am doing
>this for the people I love because the truth is, I can't stand the
person I
am anymore...I no longer even know who I am.
>
 Luke could say nothing more because Sonny had turned on his
heel and
>walked out the door. And Luke knew that for Sonny, there was no
turning back.

>::::::::::

> Luke entered Lucky's house and made his way into the living room.

Laura, Liz and Lucky were all sitting down on the couch. Luke sat
down in the
>chair across from them.

>Luke: Well, the suspect list is dwindling, but we are no closer to
finding
Lexi.
>
 Lucky shook his head, confused.
>
Lucky: What are you talking about?
>
Luke: Sonny told me that Moreno didn't do it and Helena told me
that Faison
>is dead.

> All three pairs of eyes widened.

>Lucky: What?

>Luke: Yeah, that's right. Seems that all of those years ago when you
escaped
from Faison, well Helena didn't take too kindly to that.
She had him offed.
>
 Elizabeth squeezed Lucky's hand and began softly.
>
Liz: Then why did the guy who took the money say that Faison
employed him?
>
 Luke shrugged.
>
Luke: My guess is that it was decoy so that the police would
stop looking for
>the real kidnapper.

> Lucky shook his head, looking down.

>Lucky: I should have known. I should have known that guy wasn't
telling me
the truth. All along he wanted to get caught, so that
he could say it was
>Faison. His employer planned on him getting caught. I...I have to go

down
>to the police station. Maybe I can get the truth out of him...Find out who
>really has Lexi.
> Lucky ran a shaking hand through his hair. Elizabeth rubbed his back
>and spoke up.
>
Liz: I am going with you.
>
 Lucky turned to her.
>
Lucky: Baby, you don't have to do that.
>
 Elizabeth nodded, her eyes determined.
>
Liz: Yes, I do. She's my daughter, too and I want to tell that guy exactly
>what I think of people who have anything to do with taking children from
>their families.
>
 Lucky smiled and nodded.
>
Lucky: Okay, let's go then. We'll be back in a little while, Mom and Dad.
>
 Luke and Laura nodded and watched them leave.
>
:::~::~
>
 Lucky and Liz walked into the PCPD. They spotted Taggart and

>approached him.
>Lucky: We need to see the guy you put in custody today.
> Taggart shook his head at them.
>Taggart: Not going to happen. I can't allow that. He already told you what
>you wanted. And I ran a check on him. There's no record of his fingerprints
>and the name he gave us was a fake. We don't know anything about him but
>what he told you.
>
 Lucky shook his head.
>
Lucky: He lied. Helena told my father that Faison is dead. He isn't behind
>this and someone else is the kidnapper. This was just to throw us off his
>trail. His employer wanted him to get caught so that he could lead us in the
>wrong direction.
> Taggart nodded and sighed.
>Taggart: Okay, well if you think you can get him to tell you the truth, be my
>guest. Kendall, bring "Mr. Joe Smithson" into the interrogating room.
>
 Kendall nodded and brought the prisoner into the room. Lucky and
>Elizabeth entered the room, their eyes piercing the man's. They sat down
>across from him. Lucky licked his lips and began.

>
Lucky: I know Faison isn't your boss, so tell me who the hell is.
>
 The man grinned and leaned toward them.
>
Man: It doesn't matter because your little girl is some place where you'll
>never be able to reach her. My boss told me what to do and I did it.

> Elizabeth's felt her eyes tear up and she slammed her fists on the
>table.
>
Liz: Tell me where my baby is, you bastard! What kind of person are you?!
>What kind of spineless loser helps an equally spineless loser prey on small
>children?! Tell me where she is!
>
 The man was taken aback by Liz's sudden outburst and he leaned back.
>Elizabeth couldn't help it and Lucky only squeezed her hand in his,

proud of
his wife.

>
Lucky: You're never going to get out of here now. The police know you have

>information and you're going to rot in jail.

> The man only shook his head and smiled. Lucky and Liz whipped their
heads in the direction of a voice in the doorway. It was Taggert.

>
Taggert: I'm sorry, but he is being released.

>
 Lucky and Elizabeth's eyes grew wide.

>
Lucky: What?! How?!

>
 Taggert shook his head, rubbing at the back of his neck.

>
Taggert: His lawyer just walked in and got him off on some ridiculous

>technicality. I'm sorry, but we can't hold him.

> Lucky and Elizabeth's faces dropped. Lucky glared daggers at the man.

>Lucky: This is what your boss always planned. For you to tell your lie and
then walk away scott free. I am sure he or she never thought we'd know that

>there was no more Faison, maybe your boss doesn't even know. But that
doesn't matter, does it? We still don't know where our daughter is! Damn

>you!

> Lucky practically leapt across the table and grabbed the man by the
collar.

>
Lucky: We will get her back! Nothing and no one can stop that!

>
 That was all Lucky could say because Taggert had pulled him off the

>man. Taggert motioned to the prisoner and called to Kendall.

>Taggert: Kendall! Get this punk out of my face!

> Kendall walked in and grabbed the man. The man smiled and looked at
Lucky and Elizabeth.

>
Man: Your daughter is quite a beauty, too bad you'll never see her again.

>
 Lucky tried to rip free of Taggert's grasp, but he held on tight.

>
Taggert: Stop it! Lucky, just stop. You have to keep your cool, man. I

>wish that I could have kept him behind bars as much as you do, but we can't.
We just have to hope that another lead will come in.

>
 Lucky shook free of Taggert and looked him right in the eye.

>
Lucky: Hope is something that is getting harder and harder to come by

>everyday...I don't know how much more we have left.

> With that, Lucky and Elizabeth left the room. Taggert watched them
leave, wishing that he could do something to give them more hope.

>
:::~::~

>
 Lucky and Elizabeth returned home. Lucky informed Luke of all recent

>developments, including the phones they now had set up to take calls
regarding Lexi's kidnapping. They had already been flooded by phone calls,

>all of which were thoroughly checked out and entirely fruitless.

> Elizabeth slowly made her way up to Lexi's room. She felt farther

away from her daughter than ever. She needed to feel as close to
her as
>possible. She slowly opened the doorknob. She was surprised to see
Laura
sitting in the rocking chair, clutching a blanket.
Elizabeth smiled at her
>and walked over to her. Laura looked up at Elizabeth, her tears just
short
of falling from her eyes.
>
Laura: She loved this blanket. I remember when I crocheted it
for her. I
>started making it the day after I found out I was going to become a

grandmother. I remember picking all of the pastel colors, just to
be safe in
>case it was a boy. But I knew it was girl. I always knew you were
having a
girl. I don't know how, I just did.
>
 Elizabeth smiled and wiped at her eyes.
>
Laura: And the day that she was born I gave it to you. She
always loved it,
>from the the very first day. And when she grew, she used to drag it
all over
the place.
>
 Elizabeth nodded and laughed through her tears.
>
Liz: I remember. I used to have to tear it away from her just so
I could wash
>it. It was all but attached to her...She adored it and the person
who made
it for her.
>
 Laura smiled and nodded. She watched as Elizabeth dropped her
head
>and walked over to Lexi's bureau. She fingered a baby picture of
her, her
tears dropping onto the wood of the bureau. Then she
covered her face with
>her hands, sobbing and mumbling...

>Liz: Oh God...This is all my fault!....All my fault!

> Laura shook her head and quickly got up. She pulled Liz into her
arms
and spoke.
>
Laura: No it's not, Elizabeth. Please don't lay this blame on
your shoulders.
>
 Elizabeth pulled back, wiping her face with the back of her
hand.
>
Liz: I looked away, Laura. This happened because of me.
>
 Laura shook her head again and spoke determinedly.

>
Laura: No it didn't. It happened because someone made a choice,
a horrible
>choice. You didn't do anything wrong, Liz.

>Liz: I wish I could believe that.

>Laura: You can. Honey, guilt will get you nowhere, except a dark
place. A
place that can swallow you whole if you aren't careful.
I know, Liz. When I
>thought Lucky had died, all I could do was blame myself...I thought
that I
should have done more to get him home, I should have done
something, anything
>so that he wasn't in that room all alone. I blamed myself and it
almost
killed me inside...It almost killed me altogether. But
then I realized that
>blaming myself was doing no one any good. It wasn't helping me, my
daughter
or my son. And it wasn't going to bring back Lucky. I
had to live with my
>choices and with what had happened in my life. I knew that I had to
get past
what I felt, if I wanted to live again. The only way
that you can help Lucky

>and Lorenzo is by moving past your guilt, Liz. And it's the only way you can
help Lexi, too. She wouldn't want you to blame yourself...She'd only want you
to hope for the day when she'll be back in your arms.
> Elizabeth smiled at Laura, the words finally sinking in. Her guilt
slowly slipped away. She wrapped her arms around Laura's neck and

>whispered...

>Liz: Thank you...Thank you.

> Laura smiled and nodded.

>Laura: You're welcome, honey.

> Laura and Liz separated and Elizabeth wandered around the room. She
walked over to a shelf that housed all of Lexi's Barbies. Her eyes scanned

>the shelf and her brow furrowed. Something was wrong. She ran her hand
across the shelf and looked closer. Then she bent down and looked on the

>floor. Laura watched her curiously.

>Laura: Is something wrong?

> Elizabeth stood up and faced Laura.

>Liz: Lexi's favorite Barbie is missing. It should be here.

>Laura: Well, maybe it just got misplaced.

>Liz: No, it was here the morning that she was kidnapped. I remember seeing
it. I didn't notice whether it was gone the last time I came in here....It's

>gone...and the kidnapper must have taken it.

> Elizabeth and Laura hurriedly walked downstairs and into the living
room. They stood before their husbands.

>
Liz: Someone took Lexi's favorite Barbie, the Malibu Barbie, with a floral

>bathing suit. It was on the shelf the last morning she was here and now it's
gone.

>
 Lucky placed his arm around Elizabeth's shaking form, while Luke and

>Laura went to tell Mac about what they'd discovered. Elizabeth turned to
Lucky.

>
Liz: The kidnapper was in the house, Lucky! In our baby's room!

>
 Lucky softly caressed Elizabeth cheek and spoke soothingly.

>
Lucky: I know...I know.

>
Liz: When do you think the kidnapper took it?

>
Lucky: Well, I guess someone could have snuck in during that day somehow. If

>he or she is clever then they could get past the security system. But it
could have happened afterwards, too.

>
Liz: But we've had police all over. How could they get past them?

>
Lucky: Well, it's been so chaotic, people coming and going all of the time.

>Someone could have come through her window, taken it and we wouldn't have been
none the wiser.

>
Liz: Why would they want her Barbie?

>
Lucky: I guess so that she would have something to play with .

>
 Lucky hugged Elizabeth to him, as she cried into his shoulder. They

>had suffered yet another violation and they wondered when it would finally
stop.

>
:::~::~

>
 After a few moments, Luke, Laura and Mac appeared before Lucky and

>Elizabeth. Mac stepped forward.

>Mac: We have a lead.

> Lucky and Elizabeth's face lit up with hope.

>Lucky: Okay, what is it?

>Mac: One of our men took a call from a man saying that he had information
regarding the kidnapping.

>
 Lucky and Liz nodded.

>
Liz: What else did he say?

>
 Mac took a deep breath and continued.

>
Mac: He said that he would only tell Elizabeth the information. We believe

>the man to be Tom Baker. He wants to meet you at 10:30 tonight in the park by
the fountain.

>
 Elizabeth and Lucky could only stand there, stunned. All Elizabeth

>managed to mumble was...

>Liz: He's back.

> Mac studied their shocked faces, before continuing.

>Mac: We think that if he's the kidnapper, then this is just some sick
maneuver by him. If he's not, then he's just using this as a way to see you,

>now that he's back in town. Either way we have to check this out. I know
it's going to be hard, but you have to do this.

>
 Elizabeth was still processing this information, when she heard Lucky

>interject.

>Lucky: There's no way in hell that I am letting my wife be alone with that
sick freak in the park at night!...No way!

>
 Mac was about to try to calm Lucky down, when Elizabeth placed her

>hand securely in Lucky's, speaking softly to him.

>Liz: Baby, I have to do this. It's the only thing we have right now. He
could lead us to Lexi. She's my little girl and I have to do this.

>
 Lucky closed his eyes and then ran a thumb across her cheek.

>
Lucky: Elizabeth, how can you even think about doing it? He raped you and

>then held you against your will. There's no telling what he's capable of. I
know you're strong, but this might just be too hard...Let me do it.

>
 Elizabeth shook her head.

>
Liz: No, Lucky. I have to do this...I can do this. I am not going to let my

>past keep me from our future with our daughter. He kept me prisoner for so
long because of my fears, but I swore I would never allow him to do that to

>me ever again. I will do this, Lucky.

> Lucky smiled and nodded. He knew she was determined and marveled at
her courage.

>
Lucky: Okay...okay.

>
 Mac nodded and began again.

>
Mac: Okay, Liz, now you will be completely safe. You'll wear a wire and we

>will have men stationed close by so that they can move in on the first sign
of trouble. We found out that he is going by the name Tim Biker and he has a

>small apartment down on Tyder Street. If he gives us something incriminating
then we will search his apartment, I have a search warrant ready and waiting.

>
Elizabeth and Lucky nodded in understanding.

>
Lucky: I am staying with the police nearby. Please, Mac, don't argue with me

>about it.

> Mac nodded and then went back to the police setup. Luke and Laura
left Lucky and Elizabeth alone. Lucky pulled Elizabeth to him.

>
Lucky: Please be careful...I love you.

>
Elizabeth smiled into his shoulder and whispered to him...

>
Liz I love you, too.

>
:::~::~

>
The time passed quickly and it was soon time for Elizabeth to leave.

>They decided to leave separately. Elizabeth was fitted with a wire and then
left. The police left soon after with Lucky in tow. They arrived and

>stationed themselves closeby. Elizabeth slowly made her way to the park,
finally stopping at the water fountain. She looked down at her watch. It was

>10:25. She was a few minutes early. The cool night air surrounded her and
the darkness of the night encompassed her. It was just like that night. Cool

>and calm. She stood before the bench, forcing herself not to look up at the
sky. No matter how much she tried, no matter how much time passed, the

>memories of that night could still paralyze her with fear. It would never
completely go away, especially not in this place. Elizabeth pulled her light

>sweater close to her body, shivering against the cool night's air. Suddenly,
Elizabeth heard a voice from behind her.

>
Man: Elizabeth?

>
Elizabeth turned around and swallowed the lump in her throat when she

>saw him.

>Liz: Tom.

> Tom smiled and stepped closer to her. Elizabeth instinctively tensed.

>Tom: You remembered me.

> Elizabeth jaw tightened as she responded bitterly

>Liz: How could I forget.

> Tom's eyes smiled in delight.

>Tom: I am happy to see you again.

>Liz: I am not here to have a polite conversation with you. I want to know
why you asked me to meet with you.

>
Tom's eyebrows raised at hearing that.

>
Tom: I didn't, but I am glad you are here.

>
Elizabeth shook her head in disbelief.

>
Liz: Yes you did! If you know or have anything to do with my daughter's

>kidnapping then you better tell me!

> Tom only shook his head, his wicked grin never leaving his lips.

>Tom: Oh, that beautiful little girl. I've seen her with you. She's as
beautiful as her mother. She's disappeared?

>
Elizabeth's face grew red and her eyes flared. She balled her fists

>and angrily lifted them at him. Her fear had vanished and other emotions had
taken over.
>
Liz: You took her, didn't you?! You did it! And now you called me here to
>flaunt it! I swear to God that if you hurt one hair on her head I will kill
you with my bare hands!
>
 Tom stepped back, surprised by Elizabeth's outburst.

>
Tom: I don't know what you're talking about.
>
Liz: Cut the crap, Tom! Stop lying for once in your miserable life! Tell me
>where she is!...Tell me where my baby is!

> Elizabeth was just about to fling herself at him, her fists flying,
but she was caught by two strong hands. She heard Lucky's calming voice.
>
Lucky: Elizabeth, don't.
>
 Elizabeth could only repeat three words.
>
Liz: He took her...He took her.
>
 Lucky's eyes pierced Tom's and his words bit at him.

>
Lucky: You bastard...I will make you pay.
>
 Tom could say nothing in return as he was read his rights and

>handcuffed. He finally said to Taggart.

>Tom: You can't arrest me. You have no reason to.

> Mac nodded and held up a piece of paper.

>Mac: Not yet, but we will. This is a warrant to search your place. Until
then, you'll be held in suspicion for the kidnapping of Lexi Spencer...Get
>him out of here.

> The other officers lead him away and Mac turned to Lucky and Liz.

>Mac: You did a great job, Liz. Hopefully, we are one step closer to
getting your little girl back.
>
 Lucky and Elizabeth nodded, their arms wrapped protectively around
>each other.

>Lucky: We're going to his place with you.

>Mac: Lucky, I can't-

>Lucky: Please, Mac. Let us do this.

> Mac could only nod, relenting tiredly.

>::::::::::

> Mac, Taggart, two other officers and Lucky and Liz slowly approached
Tom's apartment.
>
Mac: Let's do this one by the book, guys. I don't want to leave anything to
>chance.

> The men nodded. Elizabeth and Lucky took deep breaths and clasped
their hands together. There was no telling what they would find. They could
>find their daughter. They could find things that they weren't willing to
think of. They closed their eyes, clinging to every remnant of hope they
>had.

> The door slowly swung open, revealing a one room apartment.

Elizabeth and Lucky followed the police in. Their eyes studied the
>surroundings, their breath catching in their chest at what they saw.

> The walls were covered in photographs. There had to be at least

forty, scattered on three walls. Each of them contained Elizabeth and Lexi
>in them. Most of them were taken while they were in the park and Lexi was
playing on the swings. The scene was haunting and it sent shivers down the
>spines of all present. Elizabeth covered her mouth, her tears coming quickly.

>Liz: Oh my God.

> Their eyes kept roaming. Lucky's eyes gravitated to a small table.

Elizabeth's eyes followed his. On the table, lay the shirt and short
>overalls that Lexi had been wearing that day. And on the floor beneath them,
sat her sneakers.
>
Lucky: I...I can't believe this.
>
 Elizabeth wiped at her face, the images in her mind too hard to take.
> Then her eyes landed on the small couch against the wall. An object had
caught her eye. Her body froze and all she managed to say was...
>
Liz: That's her Barbie...That's Lexi's favorite Barbie.
>
 Silence filled the room, all its answers and questions slowly

>surrounding its occupance. But one question still stood out among the
others, yearning for an answer: Where was Lexi?
>

>. . . . Chapter 10

> Lucky and Elizabeth stood in the middle of the room, paralyzed by stunned horror. Could Tom really be this sick?...Could anyone be this sick? Elizabeth began to shake so much that she nearly fell to the ground. Lucky placed an arm around her shoulder, steadying her. Then he squeezed his eyes tightly shut, trying to wish the room's contents away. He finally reopened his eyes when he heard Elizabeth's shaking voice utter...

>Liz: He's been watching us...He's been watching her...Oh my God.

> Lucky pulled her closer and she buried her head in his shoulder. Mac and Taggart watched the two distressed parents, their hearts breaking for them. Mac shook his head and resumed his authoritative voice to speak to his men.

>Mac: Okay, bag all evidence. And look carefully for any sign of where Lexi might be. Dust for prints, too.

> The men nodded and proceeded to work. Elizabeth brushed at her face and looked up at Lucky. She could barely comprehend her sudden thought, nevermind speak it.

>Liz: Lucky, what if he..Oh please no...He could have done to Lexi what he did to me! She's just a child!...And where is she?!...Where is my daughter?!!

> Elizabeth was becoming hysterical and she began to pound on Lucky's chest. Lucky gingerly grabbed her wrists and allowed her to fall into his arms. He whispered soothingly to her...

>Lucky: It's going to be okay, baby...We're going to find her...He didn't hurt her, I know he didn't.

> Lucky spoke words that had never been more untrue. He knew that Tom could hurt her, that he would hurt her...And that he may have. And he didn't know that they would find her...He hoped they would with all that he was, but he could make no guarantees....And then there was the other possibility. The one that neither of them dared to confront...The one that neither of them could bear to imagine....What if they found her, only she was no longer living?...It was possible to everyone but them.

> Lucky licked his lips and spoke to Mac. His words barely concealed his raging emotions.

>Lucky: I want to see him, Mac... I want to talk to the man that stole our daughter from us.

> Mac immediately shook his head forcefully.

>Mac: No way, Lucky. I can't allow that.

>Lucky: Mac, please. I need to-

> But Mac shook his head again, cutting Lucky off. He was determined not to let Lucky win this one. It wouldn't do him any good.

>Mac: No, end of discussion.

> Lucky looked into Mac's eyes and saw that he wouldn't win this battle. He sighed and ran a hand through his hair.

>Lucky: Fine...Then I am going to take Elizabeth home.

> Mac nodded and watched them leave. They looked lost, two tortured souls who only had each other left to cling to...And their hope was dying quickly.

>::::::::::

> Lucky and Elizabeth slowly climbed their front stairs and entered their home. They both had been silent the entire way home, lost in their own thoughts. Elizabeth immediately walked upstairs, she felt sick to her stomach. Lucky watched her go and then turned to his father and mother. Luke and Laura braced themselves for the worst.

>Lucky: It was Tom. We went back to his place and...Oh God.

> Lucky looked down and Luke watched his son's tears hit the ground. He continued, never looking up.

>Lucky: He's sick...He's so sick. He had her clothes there, the clothes she was wearing that day. And her Barbie doll...Her favorite Barbie doll, lying on his couch...Then the pictures...Picture after picture lined his walls. They each had two things in them: my wife and my daughter.

> Lucky said the last part through clenched teeth. He finally looked up into the tear filled eyes of his parents. Luke managed to ask...

>Luke: Is there any sign of where Lexi is?

> Lucky shook his head.

>Lucky: No, not yet at least.

> Laura wiped at her face and tried to search for some hope in the situation.

>Laura: Well, we have to hope that they'll find something that will lead them to where she is being held.

> Luke placed his hand on his son's shoulder.

>Luke: Your mother's right, Cowboy. We have to hope for that.

> Lucky could only shake his head. The word "hope" held little meaning to him anymore. It was something he had done every second of everyday since Lexi had been taken...and she was still missing. The tears were streaming down his face as he said his next words.

>Lexi: Hope isn't doing me much good right now...And it sure as hell isn't helping Lexi!...This man...This monster raped my wife thirteen years ago, then he held her hostage. And now...now in some sick sequel he's taken my daughter. Only God know what he's done to her!...Only God knows if we'll ever see her again! So you say "hope" and I see my daughter's little mouth asking "why, daddy, why?" And hope won't let me dry her tears or answer her questions.

> Luke and Laura stared at their broken son. He had always been the strongest one of them all. He could endure anything, turn a bad situation into a good one. Hope was concept he had always held onto dearly. But he was dying inside...and he was taking his hope with

him. Luke was about to speak, when Lucky began to laugh bitterly.

>Lucky: And to think I believed that God would make it better, that God would bring her home! I was such a fool. Elizabeth was right. He has taken her from us and placed her in the hands of a rapist...What kind of God does that? I always believed in Him...I always thought that things he allowed to happen, had reasons behind them....But I can't figure this one out...If things happen for a reason, then why did He take my daughter?...Give me one good reason, because I sure as hell can't think of one.

> Luke and Laura were literally speechless. They didn't know what to say and they couldn't have if they wanted to. Luke wanted to reassure his son, but he had asked the same questions...and he had found no answers. He knew that if God truly existed, then he had blessed them all, but he couldn't justify the tragedies he had allowed them to suffer. Lucky looked at his parents and plainly stated...

>Lucky: I need answers...and I am going to the one person who can give me them.

> With that, Lucky stormed out of the house.

>::::::::::

> Elizabeth's head was bent over the toilet bowl and she was vomiting. The thought of Tom touching one hair on Lexi's head made her sick to her stomach. Elizabeth couldn't even imagine the terror she had endured. Elizabeth had been a teenager when Tom had violated her. As hard as it was for her to deal with, Elizabeth couldn't even fathom what Lexi had been forced to live through. She propped her elbows up on the toilet seat and pushed her hair back with her hands. Her head jerked to the right when she heard a tiny, frightened voice break through the silence.

>Lorenzo: Mommy? Mommy, you sick?

> Elizabeth smiled slightly at her son. She didn't want to scare him. She reached out and touched his face.

>Liz: I was feeling a little sick, honey, but I am fine now. Nothing to worry about.

> Lorenzo nodded and smiled a little. Elizabeth stood up and then picked him up in her arms.

>Liz: What are you doing up? It's very late.

> Lorenzo rubbed tiredly at his eyes.

>Lorenzo: Me couldn't sleep.

> Elizabeth entered his room and placed him in bed.

>Liz: Why couldn't you sleep?

> Lorenzo thought for a moment and then whispered...

>Lorenzo: Nightmare.

> Elizabeth sat down beside him and gently caressed his cheek.

>Liz: Do you want to tell me about it?

> Lorenzo nodded and then began slowly.

>Lorenzo: It had Lexi in it.

> Elizabeth swallowed hard and nodded.

>Lorenzo: She was in corner and crying. She was scared. And then me heard a voice and it kept saying real quiet "dead, dead". Over and over again. But nobody was in room. It was so scary.

> Elizabeth looked at the frightened face of her son and prayed that his dream was not a sign. She had not let herself consider the possibility and she wasn't going to start now. Lorenzo wrinkled his nose and asked quietly.

>Lorenzo: Was it true?...Is Lexi dead?

> Elizabeth vigorously shook her head and spoke comfortingly.

>Liz: No, baby, she isn't. We're going to get her back just fine.

>Lorenzo: But how you know she's okay?

> Elizabeth didn't know, she couldn't. But that didn't stop her from listening to her heart.

>Liz: Because I would know if she wasn't. You see, mommies have a special talent. They always know whether or not their kids are okay. That's why I know when you're sick and why I can always tell when Lexi's faking. We have a connection. It started when you grew in my belly and it will always be there....She's okay, Lorenzo, I know it.

> Lorenzo nodded his little head and smiled.

>Lorenzo: That's cool, mommy.

> Elizabeth smiled and nodded.

>Liz: Yes, it is....Now try to go to sleep, okay.

> Lorenzo nodded and Elizabeth bent down to kiss him.

>Liz: I love you...Dreams of gold.

>::::::::::

> Lucky slowly walked into the PCPD. He had no idea how he was going to see Tom, he only knew that nothing would stop him. He hid himself in the shadows and pondered stealing the keys to the cell. But then luck finally shined on him. Tom was being moved. Lucky guessed he was making a phone call or something. He walked right by Lucky, his arm gripped by an officer. Tom's back was to him. Lucky felt the rage build up in him. He couldn't contain it and he stepped out of the shadows. His words dripped with anger and bitterness.

>Lucky: When are you going to start picking on someone your own size? Afraid you'd lose?...Well I guarantee you that I am going to rip your head off, you son of a bitch, if you've harmed one hair on my daughter's head...Go toe to toe with me...We'll see who wins.

> Tom had immediately turned around at hearing Lucky's words. He grinned wickedly at him. The officer pulled at him, but he wouldn't budge.

>Tom: I've already had your wife and I am sure someday your daughter will be just as good. Such a pretty little thing.

> Lucky couldn't contain himself and his right fist connected with Tom's jaw. Lucky would have gladly killed him right there and then, if a police officer hadn't restrained him. He was pulled back, but then Lucky planted his feet and glared at him.

>Lucky: You are one sick bastard! You don't deserve to walk this earth or breath the same air as all the rest of us!...I hope you burn in hell!...I know you'll be right at home there!

> Tom only laughed and smiled at Lucky, shaking his head. Lucky continued.

>Lucky: Tell me where she is, damnit!

> Tom smiled and shook his head innocently.

>Tom: However should I know?

>Lucky: Stop lying! Damn you!..Tell me where the hell she is!

> Just then a few more officers came over and physically removed Tom from the scene. Lucky watched him go and then bent his head. He ran a hand through his hair and then shook his other arm free of the officer holding him. Then he turned around and left, having gained no more answers...and only adding to his heartache.

>::::::::::

> One week passed after that night. The police hadn't found any evidence to lead them to Lexi. Only his fingerprints were found in the room, so they guessed that Lexi had never actually been there. They continued to get leads via the telephone but none of them revealed anything. They still had no idea where Lexi was and they prayed that she had all she needed to sustain life. But hope

diminished a little more everyday for them.

> Elizabeth and Lucky were sitting in the living room, when they heard the doorbell ring. Elizabeth went to answer it and smiled half-heartedly at her sister.

>Liz: Hi, Sarah.

> Sarah smiled warmly at her.

>Sarah: Hi, Lizzie.

> Elizabeth lead Sarah into the living room. Lucky greeted her dryly. Sarah sat down and looked at them both.

>Sarah: Well, I just came by to tell you that I have to be getting back to Colorado. My boss called to inform me of some crisis they need me for. I am really sorry, I don't want to abandon you in a time like this, but I have no choice.

> Liz smiled at her sister. She really seemed sincere.

>Liz: It's okay, Sarah. I understand. Thank you for coming. We really appreciated it.

> Sarah smiled and nodded. And began cautiously.

>Sarah: I want to apologize for how I acted when I first got here. The whole lunch thing was out of line. I'm just not good at these things. I'd rather try to make it all go away. But I was out of line and I am sorry for being insensitive.

> Lucky and Elizabeth both nodded. They wondered if Sarah had finally seen the error of her ways. Maybe she was actually going to make an effort with them.

>Liz: Thank you, Sarah. It's okay though, we understand.

> Sarah smiled and stood up.

>Sarah: Thank you. I better be going then. I have a flight to catch. I really do hope you find Lexi soon. You'll be in my thoughts.

> Sarah stepped forward and gave Liz a hug. She definitely seemed different. Like all that had occurred made her realize that she should seize her opportunities to be with her sister. Liz returned the hug and walked her to the door.

>Sarah: Bye.

>Liz: Bye. Have a safe trip.

> Elizabeth closed the door, hoping that she and Sarah had just opened up a new one in their relationship.

>::::::::::

> A few hours later, the doorbell rang again. This time Lucky went to answer it. He smiled at the woman standing behind it.

>Lucky: Hi, Lucy.

> Lucy Coe-Collins smiled warmly at him.

>Lucy: Hi, Lucky.

> She followed Lucky in and then greeted Elizabeth. They all sat down. Lucy proceeded to ramble in only the way that she can.

>Lucy: I am so sorry that I haven't been around to see you guys, it's just that the Nurses' Ball is coming up and you know how it is...I have to battle Kathy and make sure she doesn't turn it into some cheesy affair. Kathy is all like "let's have paper napkins" and then I have to tell her to be quiet because I, Ms. Lucy Coe-Collins, is the head Chairwoman....So I apologize, but know that you and Lexi have been in my prayers each and every day.

> Lucky and Elizabeth smiled at Lucy. She hadn't changed one bit it all the years they had known her.

>Lucky: Lucy, we understand. Thank you for keeping us in your thoughts.

> Lucy smiled.

>Lucky: Thank you. You guys are the best. And I know that you are going to get that adorable little girl back soon. I have a way of

knowing those kinds of things.

> Liz smiled at her.

>Liz: Thank you. We believe that, too.

> Lucy nodded and took a deep breath.

>Lucy: Okay, now I know that this is not the best time for this, Lucky, but in way I think it might be just the thing you need. Now hear me out first, I would like you to sing at the Nurses' Ball next week. I know it's short notice, but I know you can do it. You see--

> Lucky shook his head, interrupting Lucy.

>Lucky: I'm sorry, Lucy, but I can't. Not under the circumstances. We aren't even going this year.

> Lucy nodded, biting at her bottom lip and pointing her pen at them.

>Lucy: Okay, I get that. I am with you on that. But I think I can change your mind if you are willing to listen to me.

> Lucky and Elizabeth both nodded reluctantly. Lucy began.

>Lucy: Well, this year we have decided to take on two causes. One, as always, is the fight against AIDS. The second one is the hope that your daughter will be returned soon. This years ball is in honor of her and of all the people who love her. She has touched so many lives and the community wants to do this for her. It's our way of showing our support for you. Both causes have one thing in common: Hope. That has always been what the ball is about. Giving hope for the future of AIDS victims. Well, now we have something else to hope for. Hope that Lexi will be back where she belongs soon...That her future will be as big and bright as that smile of hers. As a community we can gather and show all of that hope. And, believe me, the big guy in the sky won't miss that.

> Elizabeth and Lucky both slowly nodded. Lucy had made an impact on them. She had renewed their hope. They couldn't give up, they couldn't stop believing, stop hoping. They had to hold onto that. And this would help them do just that.

>Lucky: Okay we'll go.

> Lucy smiled widely.

>Lucy: Oh good. And Lucky, you'll sing?

>Lucky: Well, I don't-

> Lucy interrupted him, saying softly...

>Lucy: It'll be like you're singing to Lexi...Like you're sending her a message.

> Lucky nodded, tears gathering in his eyes.

>Lucky: Alright I'll do it.

>Lucy: Thank you. And I know you'll approve of the song.

> Lucy handed him the paper and Lucky looked at the song. It was one of his favorites and he often sang it to Lexi. She adored it. He could only nod, his voice too choked with emotion. Lucy spoke softly to him.

>Lucy: You can sing it as remembrance of your past with her...and as a look towards the future I know you will share with her.

> Elizabeth placed her hand in Lucky's. Lucky looked at Lucy.

>Lucky: Thank you for this...Thank you for this opportunity.

> Lucy blinked back her own tears and responded.

>Lucy: Anytime.

> Lucy got up and headed to the door.

>Lucy: Okay, well you don't have to come rehearse. You are a big famous singer, now aren't you.

> Lucky nodded and smiled.

>Lucy: Just come the day before for dress rehearsal to make sure your

costume fits. Okay, that's all. You two take care...Ta.

> Lucky and Elizabeth watched Lucy leave. Elizabeth turned to Lucky.

>Liz: This is good for you.

> Lucky nodded.

>Lucky: I think this is going to be good for both of us.

>:::~::~

> The next week approached quickly and soon it was the night of the Nurses' Ball. Lucky and Elizabeth arrived, sitting at Luke, Laura, Nikolas and Emily's table. Lucky was to go on first. Luke smiled at his son.

>Luke: I am proud of you, Cowboy...And I know Lexi would be, too.

> Lucky smiled and nodded.

>Lucky: Thanks, Dad.

> Just then the music started and Lucy appeared on stage. That was Lucky's cue to go put his costume on. It was actually just a fancier tuxedo, with a colored cummerbund and tie.

> Right afterwards, Mac's cell phone rang and he answered it. He looked annoyed and worried as he turned to Taggart to relay the information.

>Mac: Tom escaped during transfer. Our men are out looking now. Let's keep this under wraps until after the ball is over.

> Taggart nodded in agreement.

> Lucy smiled at the roomful of guests. As usual, her dress was nothing short of outlandish: A rainbow of colored stripes that seemed to be painted to her body, the dress was so tight. It was cut low in the back and front and a train trailed behind her.

>Lucy: Hello everyone and welcome to the 18th annual Nurses' Ball!

> Everyone applauded and then Lucy continued.

>Lucy: Now, as you all know, tonight is a very special night. It's a night in which we all band together in the fight against AIDS. A night during which we refuse to give up. It's a night that offers hope for the future. And hope is what tonight is all about. And that's why this year we have a second cause. As you all know, a few weeks ago Lexi Spencer was taken from her parents. Anyone who has had the privilege of knowing that little girl, realizes that she is nothing short of an angel. So tonight we celebrate the life she's lived and the life we know that she will share with the ones she loves. It's about hope. Hope that she will be back in her parents arms very, very soon...Back where she belongs.

> The audience clapped, all of them near tears. Luke wrapped his arms around his wife and daughter-in-law's shoulder, as he blinked back his own tears.

>Lucy: So let's get this show rolling!...As usual, I am sure this night is going to be full of fun and surprises!...Now to start our show off, here is Lucky Spencer, singing "Butterfly Kisses", a song dedicated to his daughter.

> The crowd clapped as the curtain rose, revealing Lucky. He stood in the middle of the stage, trying not to cry. His eyes found Elizabeth's and she smiled at him. Then he looked to the back of the room, where a picture of Lexi adorned the wall. She was smiling, she was happy, she was beautiful. He swallowed hard and sang to her picture...sang from his heart to the little girl who held such a special place in it. He began, his voice choked with emotion, his tears already falling.

>~There's two things I know for sure~
She was sent here from heaven and she's Daddy's Little Girl~

>As I drop to my knees by her bed at nightÂ
>She talks to Jesus
and I close my eyes and I thank God for all of the joy inÂ
>my life Oh but most of all~

> Lucky could see moments with Lexi flashing in his mind's eyes.
Every time he'd sang to her, every kiss she'd graced his cheek with.
She had been sent from Heaven and he didn't know what he did to
deserve her.Â But at that moment, he thanked God for every moment
he'd been give with her.

>~For butterfly kisses after bedtime prayerÂ
>Sticking little
white flowers all up in her hairÂ
>"Walk beside the pony DaddyÂ
>It's my first ride"Â
>"I know the cake looks funny DaddyÂ
>But I sure tried"Â
>Oh with all that I've done wrong I must have done something rightÂ

To deserve a hug every morning and butterfly kisses at night~

>
 The tears were falling freely and Lucky was singing like he
never had before. Â He had been blessed by her and she touched his
heart in an indescribable way. He remembered each hug that her tiny
arms produced. And the butterfly kisses..She gave them to him
everyday...and he treasured each one now more than ever.

>
~Sweet 16 todayÂ
>She's looking like her momma a little more every dayÂ
>One part
woman the other part girlÂ
>To perfume and make-up ribbons and pearlsÂ
>Trying her wings out
in a great big worldÂ
>But I remember~

> And he prayed to God at that moment that he would see those moments
in his little girl. That he wouldÂ see her blossom into a woman, see
her image take on her mothers, see her grow into a wonderful adult
and an even better human being.

>~Butterfly kisses after bedtime prayerÂ
>Sticking little white
flowers all up in her hairÂ
>"You know how much I love you DaddyÂ
>But if you don't mindÂ

>I'm only gonna kiss you on the cheek this time"Â
>With all that
I'vedone wrong I must have done something rightÂ
>To deserve her love every morning and butterfly kisses at night~Â

>~All the precious timeÂ
>Oh like the wind the years go byÂ

>Precious butterflyÂ
>Spread your wings and flyÂ ~
>
 He didn't want to miss the chance to see her mature and take
chances. To help her through her hard times. Watch her make the
mistakes he knew she needed to make...and then watch her learn from
them. He wanted to experience it all with her.
>
~She'll change her name todayÂ
>She'll make a promise and I'll give her awayÂ
>Standing in the
brideroom just staring at herÂ
>She asks me what I'm thinking and I said "I'm not sureÂ
>I just
feel like I'm losing my baby girl"Â
>Then she leaned over and gave me~Â
>
> Her wedding day. He'd dreamed of it since the day she was born. He
dreamt of it with apprehension and pride. He knew that he'd feel like
he was losing her, but he also knew that she would gain so much from
what she was entering into. He refused to miss that. She would look
beautiful that day....and he vowed she would get the chance to live
it.

>~Butterfly kisses with her momma thereÂ
>Stickin little white
flowers all up in her hairÂ

>"Walk me down the aisle DaddyÂ
It's just about timeÂ
>Does my wedding gown look pretty Daddy?Â
Daddy don't cry"Â ~

>
~Oh with all that I've done wrong I must have done something rightÂ

>To deserve her love every morning and butterfly kissesÂ
I couldn't ask God for more. Man this is what love isÂ

>I know I've got to let her goÂ
But I'll always remember every hug in the morning and butterfly kissesÂ

>At night.....~

> Lucky finished the song and said a little prayer, asking God to let his little girl hear his song. His tears blurred his vision, as he looked out into the crowd. No eye was left dry in the audience and they were giving him a standing ovation. Elizabeth quickly got up from her seat and walked up on stage. She smiled at him and pulled him to her in a hug. No words passed between them...None needed to...Their hearts had their own special way of communicating.

> The audience's clapping slowly faded away, while Lucky and Liz still stood on stage. As the clapping finally died down, all ears tuned into a lone pair of hands clapping at the back of the room. The audience turned to look at the person, as Lucky and Liz shaded their eyes to do the same. The person smiled wickedly and kept clapping a monotonous, haunting clap. The person walked down the aisle finally stopping in front of the stage, their tone was mocking.

>Person: Oh how beautiful!...Bravo!...What a wonderful way to honor your daughter!

> They all stared perplexed at the person, none of them knowing what to say. The person grinned.

>Person: What? Are we all a bit confused?...Oh let me clear it up for you....Tom Baker didn't kidnap Lexi...I did, you fools.

> The audience gasped and Lucky and Liz stood in stunned silence. The person could only smile and laugh wickedly.

>Person: Yes, that's right. Me...little miss goody-to-shoes Sarah Webber...Your sister.

> Elizabeth and Lucky still couldn't say or do anything. So Sarah continued.

>Sarah: I bet you all didn't think I had it in me...Well, I tried being good and you know what?...Bad is just so much better!

> She smiled as she said this, chilling everyone's spine. Mac and Taggart reached for their guns and tried to approach. She spoke to them, while never facing them.

>Sarah: I wouldn't try anything if I were you.

> Then she took out a cell phone from her purse. She smiled while saying...

>Sarah: Lovely little Lexi's death is just a button away...Don't you just love speed dial?

> Mac and Taggart stood still, while she removed another object. She glared at Liz and Lucky as she spoke, holding it up. It was identical to Lexi's favorite Barbie.

>Sarah: Look familiar?

> Sarah laughed as she placed one hand on the doll's head and yanked it from its body. She smiled at Lucky and Liz, her eyes daggers. She held the doll's head in one hand and it's body in the other.

>Sarah: I hope you're willing to play my game fairly...We wouldn't want Lexi to end up like this, now would we?...There's no telling what a psychopath can do...And, sis, I am a genuine, one hundred percent psycho.

> Nothing could be said by anyone. Her stunning revelation had

shocked the room into a deafening silence.

>
. . . . Chapter 11

>
 Sarah cackled and threw the Barbie's head and body on the stage. Then she drew a gun from her purse. With the cell phone in her left hand and the gun in her right, she pointed the gun at Lucky and Liz.

>
Sarah: What's the matter?...Cat got your tongues?...Don't you two have anything to say?

>
 Lucky eyes narrowed as he stared at Sarah. He was beginning to recover from his shock. He put his right arm out and attempted to push Elizabeth behind him to shield her. But Sarah smiled and shouted.

>
Sarah: My dear brother-in-law, you need not worry about protecting your wife. If I want to kill her, nothing you can do will stop me.

>
 Lucky stared daggers at Sarah. As much as he disliked Sarah before, he would never have thought that she was capable of this. Kidnapping a child, holding people hostage...but Lucky knew full well that insane people commit such crimes...He just had never placed Sarah in that category before...Until now, that is. He tensed his jaw and attempted to speak calmly.

>
Lucky: What are you planning on doing, Sarah?

>
 Sarah only smiled and waved the gun around a little bit.

>
Sarah: Oh you'll find out in good time.

>
 Elizabeth's mind was spinning. She couldn't believe it. Her sister, her own flesh and blood had kidnapped her daughter. How could this have happened?...What had Elizabeth done to deserve this? She cleared her throat and tried to speak.

>
Liz: Why? Why did you do this?

>
 Sarah's eyes focused on her sister. It was a look of pure hate. Her lips grew thin and she spoke, bitterness lacing every word.

>
Sarah: Why?! Why?! You mean you can't figure it out? Geez, Lizzie, I always knew you were the slow one, but I never thought you could be this stupid.

>
 Elizabeth could feel the anger begin to rise up in her. Lucky was feeling the same and it took all he could to control it. He glanced around the room, noticing the shocked faces of the guests and their frozen figures. His eyes scanned the tables, until they locked with his father's. He smiled reassuringly at him and then raised his hands, palms down, moving them up and down. He was telling him to play it cool, to keep his calm. Lucky knew he had to try his best for Lexi and Liz's sake, but he didn't know if he'd be able to. Elizabeth licked her lips, her anger reaching boiling point.

>
Liz: No Sarah, I guess I am not as smart as you are. I have never mastered a plan to steal an innocent child, such as you have. Of course, that also makes me the sane one, I suppose.

>
 Sarah threw her head back and laughed.

>
Sarah: Oh now there's the feisty Lizzie I remember!...The one that Lucky couldn't stand all of those years ago. That is until you decided to play the damsel in distress role and Lucky had to save you....He couldn't stand you before..or have you forgotten?

>
 Sarah smiled, throughly proud of herself. She had just made light of Elizabeth's rape and didn't give a damn. And that's when Lucky lost it. He couldn't stand her disrespecting Liz in that way.

>
Lucky: What the hell is wrong with you?! Oh that's right, you have a few screws loose! How dare you treat what Elizabeth went through as if it was a maneuver by her! You see, I found out who

Elizabeth really was after that. I had never given her a chance before. And I am sure you know why. I must have been suffering from temporary insanity myself, because somehow, I had a thing for you!...But guess what Sarah?...I saw you for who you really were, too. An insensitive, uncaring, selfish little bitch who should have been voted "most likely to turn into a psychopath" in the yearbook!

>
 Sarah was taken aback by Lucky's comment. She had never gotten over him and it was a series of events involving her unresolved feelings for him and jealousy of her sister, that had led her to this point. She shook her head and snickered.

>
 Sarah: Those are some pretty strong words for a man whose daughter's life is in the hands of the very person he just insulted. Just remember Lucky, I have nothing to lose...and only satisfaction to gain.

>
 Lucky lowered his eyes, berating himself for losing it. He had to be more careful. He had seen his share of unstable people, actually a lot of peoples' share, and Sarah ranked right up there with shakiest of them all. Sarah climbed the stairs to the stage and stood across from Lucky and Elizabeth. She pointed the gun out into the crowd and grinned wickedly.

>
 Sarah: That's right. Sit there like a good little audience. Remember not to try anything, I wouldn't want to accidentally hit the speed dial button or pull the trigger.

>
 Luke glanced at Laura, who squeezed his hand beneath the table. Luke felt so helpless, but there was nothing he could do. If he attempted anything, Sarah would harm someone he loved. He wouldn't take that chance.

>
 Sarah laughed and pointed the gun back on Lucky and Liz.

>
 Sarah: So let's take a little stroll down memory lane. See how it all started. Almost fourteen years ago, I came to this lovely little town. And the guy's tongues fell out of their mouths when they saw me. Nikolas couldn't get enough of me...and you, Lucky, a spatula had to pick you up off the ground everytime I walked by.

>
 Nikolas shook his head, himself wondering how he ever had liked her. Lucky licked his lips.

>
 Lucky: Well, we all make one really terrible mistake that we regret, I guess that was mine. But if I remember correctly it was Nikolas and me who rejected you after.

>
 Sarah glared at Lucky, her cheeks growing red.

>
 Sarah: Oh yes, after little miss crisis came along, she had you wrapped around her finger. So I left. I went to Europe. I thought when I returned, that you would have forgotten about her. But instead I found you had married her one month before. I guess my invitation must have gotten lost in the mail.

>
 Elizabeth had sent her sister an invitation but it was returned to her, the address seemingly wrong. Now Elizabeth and Lucky were grateful that she hadn't known about it, there was no telling what she would have done. Sarah smiled and chuckled.

>
 Sarah: And that was it. The beginning of my downward spiral. No one rejects me, Lucky. And you had to pay for doing so. Then there's you, my dear sister. You stole everything I had ever wanted away from me! Lucky was mine, we were supposed to get married, those kids were supposed to be ours!...You stole that from me...So I knew I had to ruin your whole life, the life that should have been mine...And what better way to start than stealing your precious daughter away from you.

>
 Elizabeth and Lucky shook their heads in disgust. It was all about revenge and jealousy. She had created a world for herself and

lived in it. Lucky was never hers, Elizabeth didn't steal him away. But that was the way it had gone in Sarah's mind.

>
Liz: You really don't have a clue do you? You drove yourself crazy with delusions about a life that doesn't exist. Lucky was never yours!...And he and I created this life together!...You have no claim to it! You are a sick, pathetic excuse for a human being!

>
 Sarah began to breath harder, her eyes growing wild. She raised her gun and shot at a chandelier hanging in the middle of the room. The crystal shattered and light sparks scattered to the floor like a fireworks display. A few screams filled the room, while heads ducked away from the falling debris. She turned back to Lucky and Liz, grinning.

>
Sarah: Now, see what happens when I get angry? Unless, you want the next bullet to go into one of your heads, I suggest you keep the insulting to a minimum.

>
 Lucky and Elizabeth could only nod, clearly shaken by the incident. Elizabeth wished that she hadn't reacted that way, but there was no way she could have curbed her emotions. Sarah giggled, allowing the gun to twirl around her finger.

>
Sarah: Now, let's here more of the story. I went back to Colorado and got my degree and job at the company I work for now. They had no idea how unstable I really was. They didn't know that I would stay up nights leafing through magazines with your faces in them. But I did. I found every picture that you and Lucky were in. Supportive of me, isn't it? And they had no idea that I would carefully remove your head, my dear sister, from each and everyone. And then I would make a "Lizzie's head" collage. I stuck it up on my wall and practiced throwing darts in between your eyes...Let's just say I am a damn could dart thrower now!

>
 Elizabeth and Lucky could only stare at her. They were discovering just how sick she truly was. She smiled at them and then laughed.

>
Sarah: And my company had no idea that every guy I would meet, I would call "Lucky". They would ask me why and I would tell them the exact reason. Hmm..wonder why they never called back?

>
 Sarah bent her head back and let out a loud, bellowing laugh. When she finally recovered she looked back at them.

>
Sarah: And then I reached my peak psychotic level. One year ago, I managed to get pregnant on a one night stand. It was all part of my plan. I would have children, I would create a duplicate of your family...and then I'd win Lucky back.

>
 Lucky shook his head. She made no sense and her reasoning showed no shred of logic. He watched as Sarah's eyes grew dark. Her voice was bitter and angry as she continued.

>
Sarah: But I lost my baby! Two months into the pregnancy, I lost the child that would have given me it all. So I knew I needed a new plan...A plan that's sole goal was to make you suffer, Lizzie...suffer like I've suffered. I knew no happiness...and you deserved the same fate. As did you, Lucky. Rejection equals revenge.

>
 Sarah stared at them, as if waiting for them to speak. Elizabeth decided to try a new approach. A sympathetic one. She spoke softly.

>
Liz: Sarah, you can still be happy. You just have to make your own family. It's not too late.

>
 Elizabeth bit her lip and studied Sarah.

>
Sarah: What kind of crap is that? You don't give a damn about me! And I don't need your pity! So save it, Lizzie, it will get you nowhere!

>
 Elizabeth lowered her head. Lucky squeezed her hand in his,

hoping to give her some reassurance. Sarah continued.

>
Sarah: And so my plan began. I carefully plotted every point. It was a game. And the rules were made by me. I would have you all going around in circles, suspecting everyone but me. Until I was ready for the breathtaking finale! And it finally arrived in the form of the Nurses' Ball. I knew you would end up going, once I got wind it was dedicated to the little brat. So decided to go back to Colorado and settle things first.

>
 Sarah stopped and took a deep breath.

>
Sarah. So five months ago, the planning began. I picked out the date. And then I used my boss's jet, we'll get into him a little later, to fly here. I was here in no time. And so I waited, watching your every movement that day. I knew you had the day off, perfect way to give you the guilt you deserved.

>
 Elizabeth shook her head. Sarah had planned it so she would feel guilty. She wanted Elizabeth to suffer in as many ways as possible. She continued.

>
Sarah: So I watched you. Poor little Lexi scraped her knee, all because of her big, bad mommy. And Lorenzo, what a darling. Such a cute picture he made that day at school. But you really shouldn't have fought with your little girl like that. Oh how you must have regreted that.

>
 Elizabeth couldn't believe she knew all of that. She had been watching them like a hawk. It sent chills up and down her spine to know that their privacy had been invaded like that.

>
Liz: How could you have known all of that?

>
 Sarah smiled at her sister.

>
Sarah: You really shouldn't leave windows open like that, Lizzie. There's no telling who can come in and make themselves at home.

>
 Elizabeth's mouth opened wide. Sarah had been in the house that afternoon. Elizabeth remembered now that she had opened a window in the living room. She never thought anything of it. They lived in a safe neighborhood and it was something they did often to let fresh air in. Sarah smiled in satisfaction as she watched Liz's reaction.

>
Sarah: So I stayed in your house, waiting for the right moment. I heard you force Lexi to go outside. I knew that was my chance. I positioned myself near your screen door on the left side of the house, where I could hear you in the kitchen. And then the phone rang. BINGO!

>
 Elizabeth closed her eyes, remembering the moment forever burned in her memory. Lucky looked at his wife, his heart breaking. He gently rubbed his thumb across her hand, the only gesture of comfort he could allow. Sarah went on.

>
Sarah: So you turned around to answer it and I was out the door. I stood on the side of the house and called out to Lexi.

>
~~*~*~Flashback: The day of the kidnapping, told from Sarah's P.O.V. (She is saying the words aloud, too) *~*~*~*

>
 I smiled at Lexi and softly called her name. Lorenzo was no where in sight. I guessed he must have been on the other side of the yard. Lexi immediately smiled at me and ran over to greet me.

>
Lexi: Hi, Aunt Sarah!

>
 That was all she could say, because I clamped my hand over her mouth. The immediate look of fear in her eyes was satisfying to me. I knew I had to act fast, so I picked her up and ran down the hill. I got into the rented car I had hidden behind some bushes and threw Lexi across the driver's seat and into the passenger seat. I could

hear you beginning to call her in the backyard, so I quietly turned the engine on and drove away...out of sight.

>
 When we were five miles away, I stopped the car and turned to Lexi. She was frightened and hadn't said a word. I roughly placed the seatbelt around her. She looked up at me, her tears ready to fall...I had never seen a more wonderful sight.

>
Lexi: What are you doing, Aunt Sarah? I want to go home.

>
 I shook my head and began to drive again.

>
Sarah: You can't go home.

>
Lexi: Why?

>
 I looked over at her and smiled.

>
Sarah: Because your mommy and daddy don't want you anymore. I guess because you've been a bad girl.

>
 I waited for her to pout and begin to cry, realizing it was true. But it didn't happen. Instead she turned to me and stated.

>
Lexi: You're lying! My parents love me and would never do that!...You took me away from them!

>
 She always was a very stubborn child, just like her parents. I wasn't going to disagree with her. So I said, in as stern a tone as I could manage...

>
Sarah: Yes, that's right, I took you. And you better behave with me or you'll never see your darling mother or your precious father again...That's a promise, dear neice.

>
 Then I watched her sink into the chair and remain quiet. I watched proudly as the tears began to roll down her cheeks.

>
~~*~*~Present Day *~*~*~*

>
Sarah: Then we reached the airport, boarded the jet and headed to Colorado. There I locked her in a room and gave her a toy...a Barbie, I know how she loves them.

>
 Sarah smiled at Lucky and Liz who were both noticeably crying. The description had been almost too hard to take. They couldn't even imagine how frightened Lexi must have felt. How could she have treated a little girl that way? Her own neice that way?...They were, however, glad that Lexi didn't buy into Sarah's lies. She always had their love with her. Elizabeth tried to control her emotions, but she couldn't do it. She angrily spat out....

>
Liz: How could you?! She's just a child! She didn't do anything to you!

>
 Sarah only laughed and shrugged her shoulders.

>
Sarah: That's the beauty of it, little sis. The innocent pay for what you've done.

>
 Elizabeth shook her head in pure disgust. Sarah continued.

>
Sarah: So then the plan really kicked in. I made sure my boss would cover for me, give me an alibi.

>
 Lucky raised his brow at that.

>
Lucky: And what man in his right mind would assist you in kidnapping a child?

>
 Sarah grinned at him.

>
Sarah: One who had no choice. You see, he was vice president of the company and I had discovered that he was embezzling money from it. So I decided to use it to my advantage. Good old-fashioned blackmail. I would ruin him, he would lose everything he had, unless he cooperated. He did so. I told him to tell the police I was in a meeting with him all day. The brainless twits at the PCPD didn't bother to see if any of my co-workers could back up his story, by saying they had seen me come to work that day. Then I forced him to let me use his jet and to look in on Lexi while I was back in P.C. To

feed her and so on. Amazingly, she was in the guest bedroom of my apartment the whole time...But not anymore.

>
 Mac shook his head, clearly annoyed. How had his men missed this? He had left Taggart to handle it and he guessed that they had just made a simple phone call to the boss. Mac knew it was his fault, too. They had focused so much on enemies, that they hadn't investigated family members closely enough. He knew the statistics. Many kidnapped children are taken by family, friends and acquaintances. Maybe he just didn't want to let himself believe it was the case this time.

>
 Sarah went on.

>
Sarah: So then I came here. I would be the supportive sister, at least I would try. No one would suspect me. And it gave me a chance to move my plan along. First, I quietly went upstairs and got Lexi's favorite Barbie. You know, the one missing it's head right now. Yes, that's right, the one on Tom Baker's couch was store bought.

>
 Lucky and Elizabeth couldn't believe how intricate she had been. Of course, she took the Barbie...She could do it unnoticed and without drawing suspicion to herself. Sarah went on.

>
Sarah: Then I dropped off the ransom note. Did you like how I used the different colors and shapes? It took me quite a while. You, Lucky, didn't see me hiding in the bushes when you answered the door. And by the time Deputy Dewey and Barney Fife came out looking, I was long gone. And you did precisely what I wanted. You thought it was a crazed fan looking for money. I know you suspected other motives, but you still complied. So then Lucky made the drop. I never expected him to go after the man I hired. But he did. The man was supposed to wait until the police found him, I knew there would be a trace, and then tell them it was Faison. But you came first and fearing that you'd kill him, he spoke. But my plans survived that little unexpected twist. He went to the station, gave his statement in exchange for a lighter sentence, just like I planned. And then I sent a lawyer there to get him off on a technicality...All went accordingly. I paid the lawyer to keep quiet, as I did the man to help me.

>
 Sarah smiled at them. She was proud of her plan. She shook her head and chuckled.

>
Sarah: Of course, you helped me out, too. You came up with suspects all on your own. Moreno, that wasn't me. But he was a nice thought. Helena, nope not my work. But she's always the Spencer's number one suspect when a tragedy occurs, now isn't she? And Faison. Who knew that he was dead? Oh well, it didn't matter anyway. It was only to serve as a temporary decoy until I got all of the Tom stuff in order.

>
 Elizabeth's eyes widened, as she realized for the first time that Tom had nothing at all to do with this. Sarah had framed him. Lucky realized the same thing, at the same moment. Sarah smiled at them, noticing the enlightenment cross over their faces.

>
Sarah: Yes, that's right. Tom is innocent in all of this. I framed him, quite nicely might I add. I knew the PCPD would be satisfied and that would give me time to work on my finale. You see, poor Tom is just obsessed with you, Elizabeth, and your little girl, but he didn't take her. No, that distinction belongs all to me.

>
 Elizabeth shook her head, trying to understand how Sarah had managed it all.

>
Liz: How...I don't...the call...the pictures...He was there...the park

>
 Elizabeth only managed fractions of a sentence. She had believed that Tom had somehow assisted Sarah. Sarah smiled and

crossed her arms over her chest.

>
Sarah: Need a vowel, Lizzie? It really was easy. Over three months ago, I came back here on business. While I was here, I went to the park. Imagine my surprise to see you there with Lexi on the swings...and Tom Baker watching from behind the trees. So I came back the next day and found that this was a routine with you guys...and with Tom. This time I brought my camera, though. I took tons of pictures with you and Lexi. Something, Tom would be sick enough to do, I was sure. Once I saw him there, I knew I could easily frame him. So I followed him that day. I saw where he lived. Then I noticed that every night he would go back to the park, at 10:30 on the dot. He would just sit there, on the bench, reliving it. He picked the same place and same time as the rape had occurred. He's pretty sick himself, don't you think?

>
Elizabeth could feel herself shaking. Tom had been watching them all along and so had Sarah. Had she ever been alone? Would she ever feel safe again? Lucky moved his arm around her waist to steady her. Sarah continued.

>
Sarah: And then it was set. I got the man I hired to make the call saying to meet you, Lizzie, in the park, at the time I knew Tom would be there. And he was, as always. You and the police did the rest, jumping to conclusions. When he left, I slipped into his apartment. I put the Barbie on the couch, her clothes and shoes on the table. Then I painstakingly placed all of the pictures on the walls. I am quite the photographer, if I do say so myself. I worked quickly and then left. And, of course, the police fell for it. I know that Tom made himself look guilty, but that's a crazy man for you...It was all me.

>
Lucky and Elizabeth could barely say a word. She had been planning this so carefully for so long. They were literally stunned.

>
Sarah: And that brings us full circle. I left a week ago and got ready for the culmination. I flew back today, Lexi with me. Right now, she's with the very man I hired to pick up the money. He's turned out to be very helpful and he doesn't contain a scruple in his little mind. He'll do whatever I say. And I told him that if the phone rings, to kill darling, sweet little Lexi.

>
Elizabeth took a deep breath, saying a quick prayer to keep Lexi safe. Lucky licked his lips, he'd been quiet for far too long.

>
Lucky: Where is she, Sarah?..When do we get her back?

>
Sarah smiled evilly and shrugged her shoulders.

>
Sarah: It's not "when", it's "if". You have to win at my game if you want her back alive.

>
Lucky's eyes narrowed.

>
Lucky: What game?

>
Sarah only smiled and shook her head.

>
Sarah: You'll see soon enough...Right now, I'm feeling a little destructive.

>
Lucky and Liz watched in amazement, as Sarah's eyes suddenly began to roam wildly and her expression turned to that of a truly insane person. She jumped off the stage and landed on the floor. She walked to one table and pointed the gun at its occupants. She smiled wickedly at Monica and Alan Quartermaine, as they all shook with fear.

>
Sarah: How's it going, Quartermaines? Have any scandals lately? Bet you've never had one like me.

>
They were all frozen and didn't utter a word. Sarah smiled and picked up some plates in her hands. Then she threw them to the ground. The plates crashed to the floor and their pieces flew across

it.

>
Sarah: Oh that felt good!

>
 Sarah walked to another table and smiled at Carly and Jason.

>
Sarah: Well, if it isn't the tramp and the idiot. You two have more problems than I do...And Carly, you know all about being crazy, now don't you? Ferncliff's no stranger to you.

>
 Sarah smiled in satisfaction at their horrified faces. Then she picked up some glasses and flung them at a wall. She laughed as they smashed and their pieces fell to the floor. She continued onto Lucas and Tony's table. She smiled at Tony and flicked his tie.

>
Sarah: Now, you and I have a lot in common. I know all about you kidnapping that messed up little Michael. I am sure you know where I am coming from. You were pretty crazy yourself there, for a while. Bravo...We should do lunch sometime.

>
 Sarah grabbed some more plates and threw them down to the ground. Tony could only shake his head at her. Sarah continued on, stopping at Luke, Laura, Em and Nik's table. She grinned at Nikolas.

>
Sarah: Oh Nik, you've done so well. Married to a druggie spoiled little bitch... Congratulations.

>
 Nik was about to reply, but Emily grabbed his arm, a gesture that told him to remain quiet. Then she looked at Luke. She smiled slyly at him...and he smiled back, surprising her.

>
Sarah: Well, you must be proud of me. You can add me to the top of your enemy list. I think I deserve it.

>
 Luke nodded and spoke in an eerily calm tone.

>
Luke: Yes, you do. I'll be sure to put that you were at the head of the Spencer enemy class in your obituary....Because, little darlin', as sure as I am sitting here now, I am going to see that you are dead before long....Bring your sunblock, Hell is one damn hot place.

>
 Sarah's mouth closed and her eyes narrowed. Luke could see her eyes growing dark. She reached over the table and grabbed the vase. Then she slammed it to the ground, the crystal shattering into countless pieces and breaking the silence. Her eyes were wild as she lifted her gun and aimed at a table. Its occupants, ducked out of the way, as she shot, hitting their vase, too. She smiled as its peices flew in different directions. She procceeded to do the same thing three more times, each time hitting the vase in the middle of the table. She laughed bitterly and jumped back on the stage. Lucky and Liz cowered together, hoping to become invisible. Sarah smiled and looked out into the audience. Then she yelled..

>
Sarah: Are you all enjoying the show?!...I sure as hell am!...I think I'm a huge hit! I can see the reviews now..."Sarah Webbber delivers an intense performance"...or maybe..."She steals the show, wowing audiences"..or how about "She was simply smashing!"...Or my personal favorite.."Sarah Webber's performance is a show-stopper!"

>
 Sarah laughed hysterically, as the audience watched in terror. She truly was the epitome of psychotic. Then she smiled, raised her arms up above her head and shouted...

>
Sarah: Let the games begin!

>

>. . . . Chapter 12

> Lucky stepped in front of Elizabeth and looked at Sarah. She turned to face him and smiled. Lucky shook his head and silently reminded himself to remain calm.

>Lucky: What games, Sarah?..Tell us what we have to do to get our

little girl back.

> Sarah grinned widely at them and stepped closer to Lucky.

>Sarah: Well, I know that you are clever, Lucky, so I had to make my game hard enough to present a challenge for you....It's a treasure hunt of sorts...with the treasure being your daughter.

> Lucky and Elizabeth raised their eyebrows, wondering what Sarah meant by that.

>Liz: So what do we have to do then?

> Sarah laughed at Elizabeth.

>Sarah: I am sure you will be of no help to Lucky, sis. You wouldn't know a clever idea if it hit you in that pretty little head of yours.

> Elizabeth stepped forward, her eyes glaring at Sarah. Lucky could tell she was about to explode, so he placed his arm out in front of her, blocking her advance. He looked back at Sarah.

>Lucky: Are you going to tell us what we have to do or what? What are the rules?

> Sarah laughed, her spine chilling voice echoing through out the room.

>Sarah: The rules...Well the rules were made by yours truly. The game is simple. You will receive a total of ten clues by the end. You must figure each one out and the answer will lead you to a new location where you will find the next clue. And so on. The last location will lead you to your darling daughter.

> Lucky and Liz's eyes narrowed. It was too simple, there had to be more to it.

>Lucky: What else?..There has to be more.

> Sarah smiled and nodded.

>Sarah: Of course there's more. You didn't really think I would let you off that easy, did you?

> Neither Lucky or Liz moved, they only stared at Sarah waiting for her to reveal the rest of her rules.

>Sarah: You can use no outside help. Meaning no other person can help you solve the clues....and now here's the kicker...You have to reach the last location in an hour and half...or little Lexi will have an unfortunate accident...from which there will be no recovery.

> Lucky's eyes flared and his face grew red. Suddenly, he lunged at Sarah his arms outstretched.

>Lucky: You little bitch!

> Sarah stepped back, out of Lucky's reach. She held up the phone, her finger perched on the speed dial button.

>Sarah: I wouldn't if I were you. Unless, you'd rather lose the game without even giving it a try. Whether she dies now or later is of no consequence to me...The choice is yours.

> Lucky stepped back and ran a hand through his hair. He took deep breaths and tried to remain calm. Elizabeth bushed back her tears and slipped her hand into Lucky's. Her voice was unsteady and filled with rage as she spoke.

>Liz: That's impossible, Sarah. You know it's impossible. There's no way we can do all of that in an hour and a half. You've made it so we've lost before we've even begun!

> Sarah only smiled and tilted her head.

>Sarah: If that's the way you feel, Lizzie, then don't play. Like I said, the choice is yours.

> Lucky looked at Liz, knowing they had no choice. They would need a miracle to get to the last location in anywhere close to the allotted time, but they would have to pray for one. It would be Lexi's only chance.

> Sarah smiled at them and excitedly clapped her hands together.

>Sarah: Oh goody! I can't wait to see how the game ends! Have fun!

> It took Lucky and Elizabeth all of their energy to stay calm while they watched Sarah's gloating face. They couldn't believe that their daughter's life depended on a game. But it did...and it was all being orchestrated by a madwoman...and a clever one at that. Sarah stuck her hand out at them, revealing an envelope.

>Sarah: Here's your first clue...See you at the finish line.

> Lucky held the envelope in his hand and then watched as Sarah walked to the front of the room, the gun in her hand and pointed at everyone. She stopped at the doorway and smiled at them all.

>Sarah: I had a ball and I hope you all did, too!...Plus, what's the Nurses' Ball without a little fun...and whole lot of surprises!

> With that, Sarah walked out the door, completely untouched. Lucky and Elizabeth left the stage and headed for the door. They stopped at his parents' table.

>Laura: Please be careful...There's no telling what she's capable of.

> Lucky and Liz nodded. Luke stood up and looked his son directly in the eyes.

>Luke: You've been prepared for this you're entire life, Cowboy. You can do this, just don't lose sight of the prize. She's clever, but she's no Spencer. I know you can do this and I am proud of you, son. Now, go bring my granddaughter back.

> Lucky smiled weakly at his father and nodded in gratitude at him. Then he grabbed Liz's hand and began walking to the door. On his way out, Mac caught his eye. Without saying a word, he took out a gun and dropped it into Lucky's pocket. Lucky looked at him strangely at first and then smiled at him. Mac nodded and whispered a simple phrase into his ear.

>Mac: You do what you have to do, just bring that little girl home safe and sound.

> Lucky nodded and then looked at Elizabeth. He grabbed a tight hold on her hand and they waked out of the room, a determination shining in their eyes...and a parents' love filling their heart.

>::::::::::

> Lucky and Elizabeth walked out into the lobby of the Port Charles Hotel. Lucky held the envelope in his hands. He knew Sarah was watching and that the countdown would begin once the envelope was opened. Elizabeth's eyes looked up at him, worry clouding every part of them.

>Liz: Lucky, what if we can't do it...It's close to impossible...She'll ki-

> Elizabeth began to sob and Lucky pulled her into his arms. He spoke to her, while trying to control his own emotions.

>Lucky: We will do this, Elizabeth. I promise you that. We love Lexi and nothing is stronger than that. We have that on our side, Sarah doesn't. I know we both have been doubting God lately, but we need Him now more than ever. He gave us Lexi and he gave us this chance to get her back. We have to believe in Him...and ourselves.

> Elizabeth nodded and wiped at her eyes. Lucky touched her cheek and they were both quiet. Each knew what the other was doing: offering a silent prayer to God...They would surely be needing Him.

> Elizabeth looked down at the envelope and Lucky's eyes followed hers. They both took a deep breath and Lucky glanced at his watch. It was two seconds before 9 p.m. They would have one hour and a half,

time would be up at 10:30 p.m. sharp. Lucky sighed and carefully opened the envelope. He quickly pulled out a white folded piece of paper and opened it up. Lucky and Elizabeth's eyes quickly scanned the typed black bold words:

> AND SO THE FATEFUL GAME WILL BEGIN. NO ONE KNOWING JUST WHO'LL WIN. TRY YOUR BEST, USE YOUR WITS, IN THE GAME OF ONE WHO IS VERY SICK..BUT NEVER FORGET, THE CLOCK IS GOING TICK, TICK, TICK.

>PATRICIA CRANSTON.

>
 Lucky and Elizabeth's mouths hung open at her creepy words. But that wasn't what had caught their attention. It was the name at the end. They had never seen it before and they felt sure it held the clue to the first location.

>
Liz: What does it mean? That name means nothing to me.

>
 Lucky ran a hand through his hair, searching his mind.

>
Lucky: You've never head it before and neither have I.

>
 Lucky was trying hard to remember all the skills he had learned from his father, but it was difficult considering all that was at stake. He licked his lips and spoke quickly.

>
Lucky: Okay maybe, it's not the actual person, but the name itself that holds the clue.

>
 Lucky and Elizabeth studied the name. They both shook their heads.

>
Liz: I don't see anything that reveals where to go next.

>
Lucky: Me neither.

>
 Lucky looked at the name again and then looked at Elizabeth.

>
Lucky: Okay, let's try to think of things that list names. Maybe that can lead us in the right direction.

>
 Elizabeth nodded and thought quickly.

>
Liz: The newspaper, the phone book, the-

>
 Lucky eyes lit up and he interrupted her.

>
Lucky: The phone book! That's it...That has to be it...There has to be something in it.

>
 Elizabeth nodded in agreement.

>
Liz: Let's ask the front desk if they have one.

>
 Lucky nodded. He and Elizabeth practically ran to the desk.

>
Lucky: Do you have a phone book. We need one. Please, it's really important.

>
 The clerk looked at them strangely, before reaching beneath the desk and handing them a big, yellow phone book. Lucky snatched it out of his hands.

>
Lucky: Thank you!

>
 He and Elizabeth walked over to some chairs. They sat down and Lucky quickly flipped through the pages, coming to the "C" section. He flipped to the right part and let his fingers trail quickly down the names.

>
Lucky: There!

>
 Elizabeth and Lucky studied the name. Patricia Cranston, 43 Gorillo Road, 245-6782.

>
Liz: Maybe the telephone number has something to do with it or maybe the address.

>
 Lucky's eyes locked in on the name and the address. Something was starting to develop in his mind.

>
Lucky: Okay, look at the first letters of her name...P and C. Why pick those letters unless it means that the location had P.C. in it's title?

>
 Elizabeth nodded.
>
Liz: Yeah, but there are so many things in Port Charles that start with P.C.
>
Lucky: You're right, that's why there has to be more.
>
 Lucky and Elizabeth studied the address and the numbers. Suddenly, Lucky's head jerked up and he pointed at the address.

>
Lucky: Look at the first word in the address and let your eyes kind of blur. What word does it look like when you do that?
>
 Elizabeth looked down at the address "Gorillo Road"..and then focused in just "Gorillo". She smiled and turned to Lucky.

>
Liz: Grill! It looks like "grill"! If you take out the two O's, then you get grill!..The P.C.Grill!
>
 Lucky nodded and smiled.
>
Lucky: That's right!...Come on, let's go! That's here in the hotel.
>
 Lucky and Elizabeth headed in the direction of the P.C. Grill, their confidence restored...and the clock's hands pointing at 9:10.

>
:::::::::::
>
 Lucky and Elizabeth quickly walked up to the hostess.

>
Lucky: Did anyone leave a note for a Mr. Lucky Spencer or a Mrs. Elizabeth Spencer?
>
 The hostess rolled her eyes and looked down at her podium. She flipped through some other papers slowly. Lucky and Elizabeth knew they were pressed for time and were growing impatient.
>
Liz: Please, hurry. This is very important.
>
 The hostess finally handed them an envelope and waved them off without a word. Lucky tore through the envelope, unfolded the paper and they both read its contents:
>
 I not yOu Cap joB sKirt Horse miNe soAk pIne miRror Cheese aLone Feet wreaTh skI.
>
 Elizabeth and Lucky shook their heads at the words.

>
Lucky: They don't make any sense...It's all jibberish.

>
Liz: Maybe it has to do with the capital letters.
>
 Lucky nodded. He pulled a pen out of his shirt pocket and wrote down all of the capital letters in row: I O C B K H N A I R C L F T I

>
Liz: I don't see anything. It still doesn't make any sense.

>
Lucky: Maybe if we group every other letter.
>
 Liz nodded and Lucky proceeded to do that. I C K N I C F I.
Lucky shook his head.
>
Lucky: I still don't see anything.
>
Liz: Okay, then maybe you should try every third letter.
>
 Lucky nodded and proceeded to write down every third letter: C H I L I
>
 Their eyes widened as the letters revealed the word "CHILI" and the clue's next location in the process. They both smiled and said in unison...
>
Liz&Lucky: Kelly's!
>
 Lucky and Elizabeth hurried out the door and headed to Kelly's....while the clock on the wall of the Port Charles Hotel's lobby read 9:14. Lucky and Elizabeth hurried in the front door of Kelly's and ran up to Tammy, who still managed the restaurant.

>
Liz: Tammy, did anyone leave a note for us?
>
 Tammy looked at them, noticing their tension.
>
Tammy: As a matter of fact, I just found one. I was wiping down a table and I found it sitting there, leaning against a vase. Here ya go.
>
 Tammy handed them the envelope. Liz ripped it open and unfolded it. They both studied the words:
>
 Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream. Merrily, merrily, merrily life is but a SCREAM!
>
 Lucky and Elizabeth studied the now haunting familiar song.

>
Lucky: I don't know what this means. Maybe changing the last word is a clue.
>
Liz: Or maybe it's something with the letters again.
>
 Lucky and Elizabeth quickly studied it again.
>
Liz: I think maybe it's simple, not as complicated as the others.
>
 Lucky looked at Elizabeth, nodding.
>
Lucky: Okay, what are you thinking?
>
Liz: Well, what do you think of when you hear the word "boat"?

>
 Lucky smiled at his wife and nodded. His mind was making this one too complicated. It was simple.

>
Lucky: The docks.

>
 Elizabeth smiled and grabbed his hand. In a flash, they were out the door...And the clock hanging on the wall of Kelly's showed that the countdown was now at 9:21.

>
::::::

>
 Lucky and Elizabeth quickly arrived at the docks, seeing as they were mere seconds away from Kelly's. They quickly scanned the docks looking for an envelope. Lucky's eyes stopped on one of the short wood posts.

>
Lucky: There it is. It's taped to that post.

>
 They both ran to the post and Lucky ripped the envelope free of it. He quickly opened the envelope, took the paper out and unfolded it. They read its contents to themselves:

>
61 62 63

>
 They both shook their heads at the jumble of numbers that were on the paper. Elizabeth looked at Lucky, as he ran a hand through his hair. She watched as his eyes flared and his hands brought the envelope up and he tore it into pieces.

>
Lucky: Damn her! How the hell are we supposed to do this?! We are running out of time!

>
 Elizabeth grabbed Lucky's hands and forced him to look at her.

>
Liz: Don't do this, Lucky. We can't lose sight of what we're trying to do. I know it's frustrating, but we have to keep going. Just think of Lexi.

>
 Lucky dropped his head and then nodded. He looked back up at his wife and smiled.

>
Lucky: You're right. I'm sorry I lost it.

>
 Elizabeth nodded and walked over to a bench. They sat down on it and studied the numbers again.

>
Liz: Let's put them all together.

>
 They put one number after the other: 616263

>
Lucky: Maybe it's part of a phone number.

>
 Elizabeth nodded and reached for the phone book that they still had in their possession.

>
Liz: But it's impossible to figure out whose number it is with a missing digit.

>
 Lucky nodded and took the phone book from Elizabeth. He opened it up at the front cover and began to flip to the address section, when something caught his eye. It was a map of the highways, interstates, exits, towns, and rest stops in upstate New York. Lucky placed his finger on the map.

>
 Lucky: The numbers, they're highway exit numbers.

>
 Elizabeth followed Lucky's fingers to each number, as he pointed them out on the map: 61, then 62, then 63. Elizabeth nodded in agreement.

>
 Liz: I've taken all of those exits.

>
 Lucky: Yeah, we have. Okay, now think, there must be some clue on the highway near those exits. Every single one is on Meretcross Parkway.

>
 Lucky wrote down Meretcross Parkway.

>
 Liz: Maybe that's a clue.

>
 Lucky: I think it is. 61 is the first exit on the Meretcross. What signs are there in between exits 61 and 62?

>
 Elizabeth searched her mind.

>
 Liz: New Anderston, one mile...That's all I can think of.

>
 Lucky nodded and wrote it down.

>
 Lucky: Me, too. Okay, now what's in between 62 and 63?

>
 Elizabeth searched her mind and then Lucky spoke.

>
 Lucky: A rest stop sign. It has only two things on it: a Mobil gas station and Goldwyn's diner. It says next rest stop, two miles.

>
 Lucky wrote down Goldwyn's, believing the gas station to be insignificant. They both looked at the words: Meretcross Parkway, New Anderston, Goldwyn's.

>
 Liz: I don't see anything. They don't mean anything to me.

>
 Lucky nodded.

>
 Lucky: Maybe it has some thing to do with the letters again. It seems Sarah is fond of that technique.

>
 Lucky looked at the words again, something was starting to come to him. All of the places in Port Charles raced through his mind. His brain began to pick apart the words. He picked up a pen and pointed at the words.

>
 Lucky: I think it's part of the words that we are supposed to use to combine and make one word.

>
 Liz: How do you know?

>
 Lucky: I don't really..It's just a feeling.

>
 Elizabeth nodded. It was a Spencer thing. They had the ability to just know things, come up with information out of thin air.

Elizabeth studied the words again. Lucky suddenly began to lose his concentration. He lifted his head and looked around him. His eyes found the peaceful water and they wandered across it. Then his eyes landed on the looming building that stood at the water's end. It's old, decaying appearance always sent chills down Lucky's spine. He shook it off and looked back down at the words. Suddenly, his eyes widened and he grabbed the pen. He hurriedly circled parts of Meretcross, Anderston, and Goldwyn's. Then he wrote each section of the word down. Elizabeth watched in awe as her husband's mind worked overtime. She looked down at the sections he'd written down: mere, der, wyn. Her eyes widened as she put the fragments in their proper place to form one word:

>
 Lucky: Wyndemere.

>
 Lucky smiled at Elizabeth, as her mouth whispered the same word.

>
 Lucky glanced down at his watch. It was 9:30. He ran a hand

through his hair and shook his head.

>
Lucky: We'll never make it there, back and still have time to finish.

>
 Elizabeth shook her head at him.

>
Liz: We have no choice, Lucky. We have to try our best.

>
 Lucky nodded in agreement and pulled out his cell phone. He called for the launch. It soon arrived and they boarded. Lucky and Elizabeth smiled warmly at Andros, the longtime launch operator.

>
Andros: Good evening, Mr. and Mrs. Spencer....Oh I nearly forgot...The last time I came to the dock a woman gave me a note to give to you.

>
 Lucky and Elizabeth's eyes widened, as Andros revealed the note. They knew it was their next clue and now they wouldn't have to waste their precious time traveling. Andros handed them the envelope. Lucky helped Elizabeth out of the boat and then he disembarked. Lucky smiled at Andros.

>
Lucky: Thank you very much, Andros. We won't be needing your services tonight. Have a nice evening.

>
 Andros smiled warmly at them and then drove away. Lucky and Elizabeth walked over to a bench and sat down. They quickly opened up the envelope and read its contents:

>
AW OH E

>ER SU

> Lucky and Elizabeth stared at the jumble of letters. Lucky licked his lips and shook his head.

>Lucky: Not again. Just more letters that don't make any sense!

> Elizabeth nodded and tried to remain rational.

>Liz: I know, but let's just try to make some sense of them.

> Lucky reluctantly nodded and studied the letters.

>Liz: Maybe we should group the letters from both rows.

> Lucky nodded and began to do so: AWOHE and ERSU.

>Lucky: I don't see anything.

> Elizabeth nodded in agreement.

>Liz: Let's think about this now. There are only a certain amount of places in Port Charles that are popular or that people are commonly aware of.

> Lucky nodded and watched as Elizabeth took the pen from him. She began to study the letters and rearrange them.

>Liz: There are only a few such places that have these letters.

> Lucky watched as she played with the letters some more. She switched the positions of each letter grouping, so they now looked like this:

> WA HO E
 RE US

>
 Elizabeth smiled at Lucky.

>
Liz: If you move the bottom row up to the first, what do you get?

>
 Lucky smiled at her.

>
Liz: Warehouse.

>
 Elizabeth nodded excitedly. Lucky grabbed her hand and they hurried in the direction of the warehouse...But the moonlight shone on his watch, revealing a time of 9:39.

>
:::~::~

>
 Lucky and Elizabeth quickly arrived at the the warehouse still owned by Sonny and Jason. They breathed a sigh of relief when they saw the note taped to the door. Lucky ripped it off and opened it up. They read its contents:

>
Crocodile Dundee

> The Grateful Dead
 Mr.Clean
>
 These clues were different from the others. They were actual, concrete words. This was change of pace. Lucky quickly licked his lips and perused the words.
>
Lucky: Okay, so these words must lead us to the next location somehow. I think we should list facts about each one and see where it leads us.
>
 Elizabeth nodded and Lucky wrote down all three.
>
Lucky: Okay, what do we know about Crocodile Dundee?
>
Liz: He was Australian.
>
 Lucky nodded and wrote it down.
>
Lucky: How about The Grateful Dead?
>
 Elizabeth thought for a moment, but Lucky spoke first.

>
Lucky: They were a rock group and Jerry Garcia was their lead singer.
>
 Lucky wrote down the information.
>
Liz: How about Mr. Clean?
>
Lucky: He was the character in a cleaning fluid commercial and he was bald.
>
 Elizabeth nodded in agreement. Lucky wrote down the main facts: Australian, Jerry Garcia, and bald. His eyes studied all three, the wheels in his mind turning quickly and relentlessly. Suddenly, he jerked his head up and grinned.
>
Lucky: I got it....Mac is Australian, Detective "Garcia", and Taggart is bald....They all work at one place...The Port Charles Police Department.
>
 Elizabeth smiled and nodded.
>
Lucky: Ironical that an insane person would pick such a location.

>
 Lucky smiled at her, before grabbing her hand. They quickly left the warehouse on their way to the P.C.P.D...But the clock was ticking away, it was now 9:47.

>
:::~::~

>
 Lucky and Elizabeth entered the station and approached the kind-faced secretary.

>
Liz: Did anyone leave a note for Mr. and Mrs. Spencer?

>
 The woman smiled and nodded.

>
Secretary: As a matter of fact, someone did. I found it quite strange, but I suppose you must know what it's all about.

>
 Elizabeth nodded and took the note the woman held. She thanked her and they both walked over to the chairs in front of Taggart's desk. They opened the note and read it's clue:

>46 6 ISE

> They both looked at yet another clue that made absolutely no sense. Elizabeth shook her head.

>Liz: Three numbers and three letters! It doesn't make any sense!...Damn her!...I just want to get my daughter back!

> Lucky held onto Elizabeth's hands and forced her to look him in the eye.

>Lucky: And we will, Elizabeth. We're almost there, you just have to hold on a little while longer.

> Elizabeth nodded and wiped at her eyes.

>Liz: Okay, I will.

> Lucky nodded and placed a quick kiss on her lips. Then he looked back down at the numbers and letters.

>Lucky: Somehow these numbers and letters hold the clue to our next location.

> Lucky looked at them, trying to come up with something that made sense. He looked up and noticed a calculator on Taggart's desk. He

picked it up, deciding to add, subtract, multiply and divide the numbers. After a few tries, nothing was coming from it. In his frustration, Lucky dropped the calculator to the floor. As he bent to pick it up, he noticed something. The screen was now upside down and the 4 and 6 he'd just typed in, now looked like a "g" and a "h". He picked it up and turned it to face Elizabeth.

>Lucky: Baby, what does that say?

> Elizabeth looked at the screen and smiled.

>Liz: GH!...General Hospital is the next location!

> Lucky grinned and nodded.

>Lucky: Bingo.

>Liz: The second number must be the floor it's on.

> Lucky nodded.

>Lucky: But what about "ISE"?

> Elizabeth took the calculator from him and began to punch in some numbers. She shook her head a few times, before her eyes lit up and she turned to her husband. She turned the screen upside down and looked at Lucky.

>Liz: What does that look like?

> Lucky looked at the screen and responded.

>Lucky: ISE.

>Liz: Right...Now watch.

> Lucky watched as Elizabeth turned the calculator to it's proper position. Then she showed him the screen.

>Liz: Now what do you see?

> Lucky read the screen and smiled at her.

>Lucky: 351...The room number.

> Elizabeth grinned widely.

>Liz: Bingo.

> They both stood up and quickly exited the station, their next destination General Hospital. But the clock on the P.C.P.D. wall ticked ominously on, it's hands showing a time of 9:55.

>::::::::::

> Lucky and Elizabeth quickly entered the hospital and got onto an elevator. They pushed 6 and waited. The wait seemed like an eternity, but they finally reached the sixth floor. They exited the elevator and looked around them. Lucky read the sign on the wall. It said: --300-350 and 351-399-- Lucky and Elizabeth quickly turned down the corridor to their right. The door was the first one on their left. Elizabeth turned the doorknob and was relieved to find it unlocked. They entered the room and found that it was an office. They walked over to the desk and found the note laying neatly in its center. They tore it open and read its contents:

>Joy is something that is hard to come by. Under no circumstances should one ever give it up freely. No one knows when they will ever find it again. Eventually, however, all joy must come to a fateful end.

>5 16 45 20 90 6 87

> Lucky and Elizabeth read the words, the last sentence chilling them down to their bones. Liz turned to Lucky.

>Liz: I don't see anything.

>Lucky: The words must have some connection to the numbers.

>Liz: But what? I don't see one.

> Lucky read the words again and studied them carefully.

>Lucky: It's strange the way she phrased everything. The sentences are broken up so strangely. It's as if she was trying to start each sentence with a certain word that began with a certain letter.

> Elizabeth nodded and took the pen from him. She wrote down the first letter of each sentence: J U N E.

>Liz: Lucky, look.

> Lucky looked down at the letters that now formed the month they were presently in.

>Lucky: June and the first number in the clue must be a date...Where is there a calendar?

> Lucky's eyes quickly scanned the room and he found one. He walked over to it and turned to the right month. Then he placed his finger on the 5th.

>Lucky: What's the next number?

>Liz: 16.

> Lucky placed his finger on the 16 and shook his head.

>Lucky: I don't see a pattern.

> Elizabeth looked down at the other numbers.

>Liz: Every other number after 16...45, 90, 87...are all too high to be dates. Maybe you should try adding.

> Lucky nodded and counted 16 dates from the 5th. He landed on the 21st of June. Then he counted 45 more dates and landed on the 5th of August.

>Lucky: What's the next number?

>Liz: 20.

> Lucky shook his head.

>Lucky: This is too easy now. There has to be more to it. There has to be more of a pattern.

>Liz: Then maybe you should try subtracting now.

> Lucky nodded and counted back 20 dates from the 5th of August. He landed on July 16th. Then he counted back 90 more dates and landed on April 17th.

>Lucky: I think I know the pattern. So far I have added, added, then subtracted, subtracted. Now I think I should add and then subtract.

> Elizabeth smiled, marveling at how he just seemed to know that some things were correct. He never ceased to amaze her. Lucky counted 6 more dates from the 17th of April and landed on the 23rd. Then he counted back 87 dates. He finally landed on January 26th. He read the words underneath the date.

>Lucky: Australia Day.

> Elizabeth came to stand next to him.

>Liz: Maybe that means Mac's house or Jax's penthouse.

>Lucky: I don't think so. So far, she's only used public places, not private homes.

>Liz: Then it's probably the Outback.

> Lucky nodded in agreement and pulled her hand into his. They hurried out of the office..But the numbers on the digital clock sitting on the desk indicated that time was dwindling...It was 10:10.

>::::::::::

> Lucky and Elizabeth quickly entered the near empty restaurant. Only one couple occupied a table. The only other occupant was the bartender. They walked up to him.

>Lucky: Hey Artie. Did anyone leave us a note?

> Artie smiled and nodded.

>Artie: Yeah, I found it when I was cleaning off one of the tables. Here you go.

> Lucky took the note. He and Elizabeth walked over to a table and sat down. Lucky ripped it open and they read the next clue:

>There is no temper or passion of the human mind and heart more self destructive than that of looking with displeasure upon the prosperity of another.

>1129 22 21

> Lucky and Elizabeth swallowed hard, the words sending chills down both of their spines. They were surely no coincidence. Lucky cleared his throat and spoke.

>Lucky: Envy. That's its definition. It's listed in the Bible as one of the seven deadly sins.

> Elizabeth nodded.

>Liz: The Bible.

>Lucky: Yeah. And the numbers are probably a page number, chapter number and a line number. The answer must be in that line.

>Liz: Where do we find a Bible?

> Lucky shrugged and looked over at Artie. He figured that it didn't hurt to ask. He walked over to him.

>Lucky: Artie, you don't happen to have a Bible lying around here, do you?

> Artie smiled at him, surprised by his request. Then he nodded slowly.

>Artie: Actually, you're in luck, I do. I am taking a Theology class at PCU and I brought it here to read when it gets slow.

> Lucky grinned widely. He thanked God for smiling down on them in that moment. Artie handed him the Bible and Lucky thanked him. He walked over to Elizabeth. He quickly opened the Bible, turning the page to 1129. Then he trailed his finger down the page, until he found chapter 22. Next, he looked for line 21. He found it and read aloud:

>Lucky: 'And yet behold, the hand of the one who is to betray me is with me on this table.'

> Lucky shook his head.

>Lucky: I don't see anything.

> Elizabeth nodded her head.

>Liz: She's trying to tell us that we betrayed her and now she's betrayed us. And that's all lead to her envy of our life.

> Lucky nodded in understanding.

>Liz: But that doesn't lead us anywhere.

> Lucky read the line again carefully. Elizabeth let her eyes study the page. They wandered across it, until they reached its top. There her eyes froze on the word at its center. She placed her finger to it and looked at Lucky.

>Liz: Lucky, look at this.

> Lucky's eyes gravitated to where her finger was. He read the lone word: Luke...It was the Book of Luke.

>Lucky: My Dad's club...Luke's Place. That's our next location. It wasn't in the text, it was just on the page.

> Elizabeth nodded and placed her hand in his. They left the restaurant, but the clock on the wall ticked on, revealing that the end was near...It was 10:20.

>::::::::::

> Lucky and Elizabeth ran up to Luke's. They were immediately relieved to see the note taped to the bottom of the door. Lucky removed it, opened it and they read:

>Ahh, the final clue. This is where your daughter is. Whether she is still alive or not, remains to be seen. So use what's left of your brains and find her:

>-----
| ----- |
>| ___|
>| |___|
| ()----() |

> -----

> Lucky and Elizabeth studied the strange picture that stood at the bottom of the picture. At first glance, it looked to be just a bunch of dashes and lines. But as one examined it closer, you could make out a square shape and car like picture. Both of their eyes widened as they realized what it meant. It was a box and a car...

>Liz&Lucky: The boxcar!

> They both turned excitedly to one another.

>Liz: It's the boxcar! That's where Lexi is! We're going to get her back!

> Lucky smiled at Elizabeth and glanced at his watch. It read 10:25.

>Lucky: We only have a few minutes left. We have to hurry.

> Elizabeth nodded and grabbed ahold of Lucky's hand. They both ran out of the club, their hopes high and their hearts racing.

>:::~::~

> It was 10:28 when Lucky and Elizabeth arrived. They studied the rusted remains of the boxcar. They had shared so many special times together there. It was full of happy memories and Lucky and Elizabeth intended to create another one right then. The boxcar had been closed for more than 13 years. They went to where its door was and found it open. They slowly climbed into the boxcar and turned in the direction of a noise. Their eyes fell on their daughter. She was sitting in the corner, playing with her doll. Her eyes were sad and her face pale. Their hearts broke at seeing her, but relief came into their minds and heart. She was safe and unharmed. Tears filled their eyes, their emotions overtaking every inch of their beings. They were about to run over to her, when someone stepped out of the shadows next to her. Sarah grinned at them and placed a gun to Lexi's head.

>Sarah: You're late...What a pity.

> Lucky and Elizabeth's mouths hung open. Lucky cleared his throat and shouted..

>Lucky: What the hell are you talking about?! We had more than one minute to spare when we entered here!

> Sarah laughed and held up her watch.

>Sarah: Not on my watch. My watch say that you are two seconds late.

> Elizabeth's eyes grew dark and she clenched her fists.

>Liz: That's not fair! You cheated, you know that you are not playing fair!

> Sarah could only giggle at her sister and respond...

>Sarah: Oh, Lizzie dear, this game was never intended to be fair...As you'll soon find out, life sure isn't. Your time is up and so is your daughter's...You lose...and I win...Oh how sweet it is.

> With that, Sarah slowly began to pull the trigger aimed at little Lexi's head, while the beautiful little girl whimpered, her sad blue eyes pleading for help from her parents. The fear in her eyes was enough to shatter their fragile hearts into a million pieces.

>
. . . . Chapter 13

>
 Elizabeth covered her mouth with her hands and began to shake her head back and forth. Her tears were coming at a hysterical rate and she could be heard mumbling the words..."No, not my baby, please....Not my baby.", over and over again. The look on her daughter's face, the fear in her eyes, was too much for her to bear. Lucky clenched his fists and tried his best to remain calm. This wasn't over yet, he was going to make sure of that.

>
 Everything seemed to be moving in slow motion. He could see

Sarah's wicked smile plastered across her face and his eyes watched as her finger slowly pressured the trigger aimed at his little girl's head. Lexi's eyes shed tear after tear, as they were focused on her parents. He could see her lower lip quivering in fear. It all but broke him and his heart.

>
 He knew he needed to do something, but it was escaping him in those few fateful seconds. He had his gun, but any movement from him and Sarah would pull the trigger that much faster and any chances he had would be gone. Finally, he quickly and loudly cleared his throat. Sarah, distracted by this, let up on the trigger and turned her attention to Lucky.

>
Sarah: What? Do you have something to say?

>
 Lucky ran a hand through his hair, thinking. Truthfully, he had reacted without much thought. He was in a panic and he just had to do something to stall Sarah. He quickly thought, trying to think of something to say. He finally decided on an approach.

>
Lucky: Nope, I don't have anything to say. I am just wondering when you're going to do it, you seemed to be taking your time. We've lost Sarah, you've won. You've punished us for all that we've done to you. We are about to pay the biggest price. There is nothing more we can do, nothing more we can say...I just want my daughter's suffering to end...So go ahead, do it.

>
 Sarah studied him. She knew what he was doing, she wasn't stupid. He was stalling. He was trying to stall as long as he could until he could come up with a plan to stop her. Still, this was unsettling to Sarah. She wanted to do this on her terms, not on Lucky's...Maybe little Lexi did deserve to suffer for a while longer. Sarah slowly brought the gun to her side and looked at them.

>
Sarah: Well, Lucky, if that's what you want, then I am afraid I can't give it to you. You see, this whole plan has worked because I have done things on my terms, when I see fit. And I will continue to do so. I suppose that your daughter has not suffered enough yet. Her misery will just have to continue until I am ready to let it end.

>
 Elizabeth slipped her hand into Lucky's and squeezed it. She was grateful that Lucky had stalled Sarah. Sarah smiled at them, while she gently stroked Lexi's hair.

>
Sarah: Did you enjoy my clues? I worked so hard on them.

>
 Elizabeth nodded at her sister.

>
Liz: Yes, they were very creative.

>
 Sarah nodded proudly.

>
Sarah: I know.

>
 Lucky licked his lips and took a careful step forward. He had just thought of something that he felt was worth a try.

>
Lucky: Sarah, what do you say to you just leaving now? You can take off, go wherever you want and the police will never find you. We wouldn't care.

>
 Sarah glared at him, before throwing her head back and laughing.

>
Sarah: Do you think I am a fool?...Well, I am not! I am not a brainless twit like your wife! I don't care about the police!...Don't you get it yet?...This is my finale, too. After I have made you two suffer as much as I possibly can, then I have no reason to go on. For the past thirteen years, that's all I have lived for...Soon, I'll have nothing more...but I will die a happy woman.

>
 Lucky and Elizabeth's mouths hung open at Sarah. She was going to commit suicide after she killed Lexi. She was a woman with a death wish...With no consequences to her actions because, to her, no tomorrow existed...Nothing could stop her.

>
:::~::~

>
 Luke and Laura made their way into his club. Luke ran a hand down his face and watched as his wife sat down on a stool at the bar. He sighed and walked behind the bar. He picked up a shot glass and poured himself a drink. He quickly downed that one and then poured himself another. Then another and another. This went on for ten minutes, with Laura just watching him, knowing that he needed to wallow in his grief. He felt like he had failed his family. He felt like he should have known that it was a family member, that he should have done something to stop Sarah before she left the ballroom, that he should be doing something now. He let out an exasperated sigh and slammed his glass down on the bar. Laura looked into her husband's eyes and saw so many emotions floating around in them. He was so scared. They both had no idea what tomorrow would bring and they were afraid to see the break of dawn.

>
 Laura watched in horror, as Luke grasped the bottle of whiskey in his right hand and threw it against the wall behind him. The bottle hit the wall with a loud crash, its pieces scattering and its liquid dispersing.

>
Luke: Damn her!...Damn me!

>
 Luke bent his head, his palms flat against the bar. Laura placed her hand on his arm.

>
Laura: Luke, this isn't your fault...We just have to hope for the best now.

>
 Luke lifted his tearstained face to Laura's. His voice was broken and husky as he spoke.

>
Luke: This is all my fault, Laura. No, I didn't take Lexi and Sarah wasn't my enemy. But don't you see? Everything bad that has ever happened to this family is because of me, directly or indirectly....It's like I'm a curse, like I have a black cloud hanging over my head...I should have known, I should have done more...I should be doing something now!

>
 Laura's heart jumped, as Luke slammed his fist down on the wood of the bar. Laura didn't really understand his logic. But she theorized that Luke needed to do something now, and feeling guilty was as good as anything. She only rubbed his hand and kept saying that he was not at fault. But Luke didn't hear her, he was in his own world now. His eyes were blank and glazed over, as he stared straight ahead and at nothing at all.

>
Luke: My whole life, I have dealt with the bottom of society. I've seen some real crazies. I've had all of these enemies and I've always been able to go toe to toe with them. I should be able to spot someone out to hurt my family from a mile away, but I didn't...I couldn't do it...All these years, the bad guy has always been after me...and just like Sonny, I am the one who is left standing, while the people I love fall around me. It's happened to you and to Lucky, you have both paid so that I would, too...And now it's happened to my son...He is going to feel what I've always felt...That my kid shouldn't be the one paying for me...He didn't do anything, he doesn't deserve it, but that guilt will be there...And if...if Lexi doesn't make it, then that guilt will grow, everyday it will grow a little more, festering in the darkest corners of his mind, until it overtakes him...I wanted better for my son...I didn't want him to have to bear the same burden that I have...Because burdens like that get pretty damn heavy...and, in the end, a broken man is all that remains.

>
 A single tear rolled slowly down Luke's cheek, as he squeezed his eyes tightly shut.

>
:::~::~

>
 Elizabeth pushed some hair behind her ears and bit her lip. She

spoke softly to Sarah.

>
Liz: Sarah, you're young, you can still have a good life...It's not too late.

>
 Elizabeth was hoping to give Sarah a reason to live. If she had a reason to live, then her actions would have consequences...repercussions for which she would have to pay...Elizabeth was hanging on to the hope that Lexi might be saved if Sarah could just let go of her suicide mission. Sarah glared at her sister, her teeth showing.

>
Sarah: Shut up!...My life?!...What the hell would you know about my life, sis?!...You've been living the charmed life forever!...You don't give a damn about me, you never have!..Well, guess what?...I don't give a damn about you!...I want you to watch your daughter die...and I hope you die inside as you watch her life slip away.

>
 Elizabeth could feel her eyes stinging with tears. Sarah had been so harsh and her words were hard to take. Lucky slipped his arm around Elizabeth's waist, steadying her shaky form. Lucky had taken his eyes off of Sarah for just a moment. But when he turned back to face her, what he found stunned him. Sarah was now sitting indian style on the floor of the boxcar. She had pulled Lexi into her lap and one of her arms was wrapped around her waist in a death grip, her arms pinned to her sides. Sarah's other arm was bent and holding the gun up to her head. Sarah was staring blankly ahead and her eyes seemed to be registering nothing. It looked as if she was in a trance. Lexi sat absolutely still, her eyes wide open and masked in fear. Lucky and Elizabeth watched in awe as Sarah rocked them both back and forth in a sing-song manner. They could hear her muttering something under her breath. They took a few steps closer, her expression never changing, and listened to her words. She was singing and the lullabye now filled the air, haunting it.

>
Sarah: Rock-a-bye baby on the tree top. When the wind blows the cradle will rock. When the bow breaks the cradle will fall and down will come baby, cradle and all....Rock-a-bye baby, rock-a-bye baby, rock-a-bye baby...Fall, fall, fall.

>
 Her last words continued over and over...and they loomed in the stunned air around them.

>
:::~::~:

>
 Luke ran a hand through hair and smirked at Laura.

>
Luke: I've got to hand it to Him, that God of yours has done one helluva a job this time!

>
 Luke shook his head and slurped some of his drink.

>
Luke: One bang-up job! Elizabeth's own sister, her own flesh and blood, taking her daughter!...And that Sarah, they don't make psychopaths like her anymore.

>
 Laura watched her husband wave his arms above his head. He was close to drunk, his words were beginning to slur and his balance was becoming shaky. Laura knew she couldn't talk to him when he got like this, but she also knew that she couldn't stop him from doing what he felt he needed to do. Laura's eyes wandered off of her husband and to the floor. Her eyes widened in curiosity at an object on the floor. It was a white piece of paper and it was lying next to the leg of one of the tables. She got up off of her stool, walked to the table, bent down and picked it up. She brought it over to Luke and handed it to him. Luke ran a hand down his face and blinked his eyes a couple of times to focus. As he read the words to himself, he suddenly began to sobber up. He quickly showed it to Laura and pointed at the object at the bottom.

>
Luke: This was one of Sarah's clues. It says here that this is

where Lexi is, it's the last clue.

>
 Laura studied the words and then the picture. Her head nodded excitedly as she realized where her family was.

>
 Laura: The boxcar, Luke. They're at the boxcar.

>
 Luke didn't say another word, he just grabbed Laura's hand and they headed towards the door.

>
 :::::

>
 Lucky and Liz took a few more steps forward. They walked slowly, their steps deliberate. Their hearts beat loudly in their chests, seemingly begging for exit. They were so close to her now, they could actually reach forward and touch her if they dared. They hoped that in Sarah's condition they could just pry Lexi out of her arms and run. Lucky bent forward and reached out to touch Lexi, but his hand recoiled, when he heard Sarah's voice.

>
 Sarah: Uh ah. No, no sweet brother-in-law...I really wouldn't advise that.

>
 Sarah suddenly shook her head and stared at them. The gun was still placed closely to Lexi's temple. She looked at Elizabeth.

>
 Sarah: Shut the door!

>
 Elizabeth hesitated, feeling as if she was frozen in place.

>
 Sarah: NOW!

>
 Elizabeth nodded and quickly turned around. She walked to the big rusted door and pushed her weight against it, trying to slide it closed. It wouldn't budge. Sarah snickered at her.

>
 Sarah: You are such a weak little bitch...Do it or I'll kill her now.

>
 Elizabeth glared at her and then looked at the frightened face of her daughter. A sudden surge of energy hit her and she pushed at the door, slamming it closed. Elizabeth walked back over to them and stood next to Lucky. Sarah shook her head and smiled.

>
 Sarah: Bravo, Lizzie....My, what a mother's love can do.

>
 Elizabeth watched in disgust as Sarah stroked Lexi's soft hair and then her cheek. Sarah smiled at Liz.

>
 Sarah: Such a sweet little girl, it's a shame that she has to pay for her mother's crimes. You never deserved her, Lizzie. could have been a better mother to her.

>
 Elizabeth clenched her fists and tried to remain calm. She pursed her lips together, forcing herself not to speak.

>
 Sarah: A good mother would never have let her child be in this position.

>
 Elizabeth closed her eyes and quickly opened them again. She spoke as calmly as she could.

>
 Liz: Then let me make things right now....Let me switch places with my daughter...Kill me.

>
 Lucky looked at her in shock and then looked back at Sarah. Sarah's eyes widened and brow arched. She seemed to be considering it. Elizabeth bit her lip and spoke again.

>
 Liz: It's me that you hate, Sarah, not Lexi...If you want me to suffer, then take my life. I will miss out on so much. All of my children's experiences as they grow. I'll miss out on the rest of my life with them and Lucky...That would truly be the best revenge against me.

>
 Lucky shook his head. He knew that Sarah would do it. She would kill his wife without a second thought. If she agreed to this, there would be no saving her or Lexi. He wouldn't let that happen.

>
 Lucky: No, take me...Do it to me...Let me-

>
 Sarah waved her arm above her head and shouted.

>
Sarah: Shut up, both of you! It's not going to happen! I want to see your eyes as you watch your daughter die...that will be my only satisfaction.

>
 They both bent their heads, their efforts to save Lexi's life by taking her place thwarted.

>
:::~::~

>
 Luke and Laura made their way to the boxcar and stood outside of it. They could see nothing inside, but they could hear the muffled sounds of voices. One in particular, stood out. It was Sarah's voice and she was shouting. Luke and Laura looked at each other, panic written on their faces.

>
Laura: What is she doing in there?

>
Luke: I don't know, but I don't think they have much time left.

>
 Luke searched the surroundings around the boxcar. He surveyed its rusted remains.

>
Luke: There's no way in.

>
Laura: Should we call the police?

>
Luke: There'd be no point in it....Sarah doesn't give a damn about punishment. They wouldn't frighten her and there would be nothing that they could do.

>
Laura: What are we supposed to do then?

>
 Luke ran a hand down his face and shook his head.

>
Luke: There's nothing we can do...Any action from us, would surely kill one of them, if not all....All we can do now is wait.

>
 Luke and Laura looked at each other, the fear and uncertainty clouding their eyes...The darkness of the night enveloped them and the silent air stood still, waiting for the sound that would break it.

>
:::~::~

>
 Sarah looked at them and laughed.

>
Sarah: Oh what good parents...You're willing to sacrifice your sorry lives for that of your daughters...Nice try.

>
 Elizabeth shook her head, squeezing her eyes shut to stop the tears.

>
Liz: How can you do it? Sarah, she is just a child. How can you kill her?

>
 Sarah shook her head and grinned.

>
Sarah: Don't you get it yet?! I don't care!...I have no problem admitting that I am insane. I told you this before. Most crazies can't admit they have a problem. But I can. 'Hi my name is Sarah and I am a psychopath'. The word 'wrong' means nothing to me. I have my reasons for doing what I have done and what I am going to do...But the only way that I am capable of doing these things is because I have nothing in me saying that I shouldn't...and everything saying that I should.

>
 Lucky and Elizabeth shook their heads. She had no conscience, not one ounce of sympathy on which to prey upon. They were running out of ways to stall and deter her. Sarah looked down at Lexi and whispered...

>
Sarah: Say goodbye to Mommy and Daddy.

>
 Lexi shook her head emphatically and her tears began to fall. Lucky watched this. Sarah had let her hand with the gun fall to her side, while she talked to Lexi. He knew this was his chance, maybe his one and only. He had removed the gun before they came in and placed it in his cummerbund. His tuxedo jacket had concealed the weapon. He glanced at Sarah again, who was still talking to Lexi and not looking at them. Quickly and in one motion, he moved to his waist and pulled the gun out. He had it pointed at Sarah, when she finally

looked up. She smiled at him.

>
Sarah: Oh good...competition.

>
 Lucky waved the gun at her.

>
Lucky: Why don't you just let my daughter go?

>
 Sarah chuckled and shook her head.

>
Sarah: Why would I do that? You know I don't care whether I live or die...That gun poses no threat to me.

>
 Lucky licked his lips and searched his brain.

>
Lucky: Well, if I kill you now, then you won't get to die with satisfaction. You'll die in vain.

>
 Sarah glared at him.

>
Sarah: And if I let her go, then I will never be able to fulfill my mission from which I will gain that satisfaction.

>
 Sarah placed her finger on the trigger and pressed it hard against Lexi's temple. Lucky and Elizabeth winced, as they watched Lexi's tears roll down her face. Lucky's hand with the gun began to shake, so he brought his other hand up to steady it.

>
Lucky: If I kill you first, you'll never get the chance.

>
 Sarah looked at Lucky, never moving the gun.

>
Sarah: You wouldn't risk it, Lucky...Your daughter's brains would be splattered across the floor, before you even put pressure on the trigger.

>
 Lucky thought about this for a moment. Sarah was right. He would never get the chance, Lexi would dead before he could...But he bluffed.

>
Lucky: I have no other choice. It's my last chance. If I luck out, then I'll get you first. I have to try, now don't I?

>
 Sarah studied him, wondering if he'd actually be the first one to pull the trigger. She smiled at him and brought the gun to face him.

>
Sarah: Yes, I suppose you do....And I guess I should eliminate my competition so that my mission is not in danger.

>
 Elizabeth was shaking with fear. The barrel of Sarah's gun was pointed at Lucky's chest, it would hit his heart and he would be dead in a matter of seconds. Then Sarah would be free to kill Lexi, too. Elizabeth would lose it all. Her family would die right in front of her. Lucky's gun never wavered. It was pointed directly at Sarah's own chest.

>
Lucky: Fine, Sarah...then it's a dual.

>
 Sarah grinned widely. Elizabeth was frantic now. Suddenly, she jumped in front of Lucky, blocking the paths of both guns, so that they would have to go through her. Lucky tried to push her aside.

>
Lucky: Elizabeth, don't!

>
 Lucky had managed to push Elizabeth aside a little bit, but his chest was now partially exposed again. Sarah watched in delight as the spot opened up. Now they were both in the line of fire.

>
Sarah: Maybe I can kill two birds with one stone. I'll shoot you both and then, in your dying seconds, you can watch your daughter's life being taken away from her, too.

>
 Everything moved in slow motion. Elizabeth stood in front of Lucky, half his chest covered. He raised his right arm up and over Elizabeth's shoulder, aiming at Sarah. In the last moment before he pulled the trigger, Sarah got down on her knees pulling Lexi in front of her, using her as a shield. Very little of Sarah was left exposed. And as Lucky's finger pressured the trigger, so did Sarah's. It was aimed at them both...Two quick presses by Sarah and one by Lucky followed. The bullets left the guns, exploding into the air...Their intent clear and deadly.

>
:::~::~

>
 Outside, Luke and Laura listened in horror at the sounds that broke through the silent, peaceful night's air. It sounded like a fireworks show, each boom louder than the next. The sounds echoed in their minds, reverberating over and over again. Three shots could be heard clearly...as could the screams that followed. Luke and Laura could do nothing, they knew nothing. Laura slowly sank to the ground her knees giving out. Luke followed suit, cradling his wife in his arms. They both cried, their own moans now filling the air....They knew nothing, but they assumed the worst.

>
:::~::~

>
 Inside the boxcar was a deadly scene. Bullet shells lay scattered across the floor, floating in a pool of blood that continued to spread.

>

>. . . . Chapter 14-The End

> The silence in the room was deafening. The blood was immense and it
was splattered across the walls of the boxcar...The pool of blood spread,

>it's crimson color strangely brightening the gloom of the boxcar

interior...The silence that floated through the air was broken by a lone moan.

>
:::~::~

>
 Luke held Laura in his arms, rocking her back and forth. Her head

>was tilted to the right and buried in the crook of Luke's arm. His head was
bent, his face hidden by his wife's head. Luke could hear Laura's words and

>for a moment he was transported back in time thirteen years to when he had
the awful task of telling Laura that their son had died. They didn't know

>then that Lucky was still alive and they grieved for him to the point of
almost dying inside. Even after he returned, those torturous moments lived

>on in their memories and hearts. They now knew the pain that came with
losing a child. They wouldn't be able to go through it again, especially if

>it meant losing their son, daughter-in-law and granddaughter...They just
wouldn't be strong enough.

>
 Luke listened to Laura's words as she repeated them, her sobs

>interrupting her frequently.

>Laura: No!...Oh God, no...Please, no....Don't take them....Please, don't take
them...Please.

>
 Laura lifted her tearstained face to Luke's. Her hair was wet and

>pieces of it were plastered to the sides of her face...Luke cupped her face
in his hands and watched as her lips trembled, slurring her words and

>betraying the confidence with which she hoped to say them.

>Laura: They're fine...All of them...I...I know it...I do.

> Luke nodded and squeezed his eyes shut.

>Luke: I know, darlin...They're Spencers and they've fought too much and for
too long to let it end like this...They're fine.

>
 Luke and Laura searched each others eyes for any signs of the hope

>that their words conveyed. But the search was fruitless...Their hope had left
them with the sounds of those three gunshots...Three bullets, three people

>they loved...For them, it wasn't difficult to do the math.

>::::::::::::

> A hand reached out, its fingers trembling with fear. Her hand landed
in a puddle of blood. Her eyes widened, as she lifted her head to look at

>the blood. It looked as if she was trying to understand it, trying to
comprehend its meaning and purpose. She let her eyes travel from her hand,

>searching for the cause of the blood. Her eyes landed on him. His eyes were
closed and the small amount of blood was coming from a grazed wound on his

>upper arm. It wasn't serious, but that didn't stop Elizabeth from
immediately thinking the worst. She moved over to him and leaned over his

>face, brushing his hair back.

>Liz: Lucky...Lucky, wake up, baby!..Please!

> When the bullets had left Sarah's gun, Lucky had fired his own shot
and then pushed himself and Elizabeth out of the line of fire. One bullet had

>grazed his arm and the other had missed them both completely. He and
Elizabeth landed on the unforgiving surface of the boxcar floor. Lucky's head

>hit the ground hard and he was knocked unconscious.

> Elizabeth touched his forehead and slowly Lucky's eyes fluttered
opened. Elizabeth threw her arms around him.

>
Liz: Oh thank God!

>
 Lucky slowly shook his head, clearing his vision and mind. He felt

>his arm throbbing, but ignored the pain. He carefully sat up and then
remembered the situation at hand. Elizabeth had forgotten that Lucky had

>shot, too. Neither had discovered yet whether Lexi had been hit or not.
Lucky and Elizabeth could see a pool of blood forming around their bodies.

>They were on their sides now and it was impossible to tell who the blood was
coming from. Lucky's mind quickly swirled with the possibilities... He may

>have killed his own daughter...In his effort to save her life, he may have
ended it instead. They were both trembling with the fear of uncertainty as

>they reached their feet. Hand in hand, they slowly made their way over to
the place where someone's life had seeped from her body. They inhaled deeply

>as they reached them, steadying themselves for whatever they would discover.
Lucky reached down and touched Sarah's shoulder, turning her so that she was

>on her back and Lexi was lying on her stomach. It was apparent then what had
happened.

>
 Lexi must have moved slightly when the bullet hit, because in doing

>so, the area of Sarah's heart had been left exposed ever so slightly. The
bullet had found that spot and pierced her heart. Major arteries had been

>severed and the blood was quick to leave her wound...Her injury was
fatal...She was dead...and the nightmare was over.

>
 They looked down at their daughter, her eyes were wide open and

>staring straight at them. Sarah's arm was, amazingly, still wrapped around
Lexi's tiny's waist, forcing her to remain still.

Elizabeth and Lucky both

>fell to their knees at that moment, their tears coming in full force.

>Liz: Oh thank God!...Lexi!...You're okay, you're alright!

> Lucky carefully pried Lexi's small form out Sarah's grip. The little
girl fell into the safety of her father's arms. Lucky pulled his daughter

>close to him, never wanting to let go of her.

>Lucky: Thank you...Thank you...Oh thank God you're okay!...You're safe!

> Elizabeth wiped at the steady stream of tears that fell from her
eyes. She touched Lexi's back and Lexi released her grip on Lucky. A slow

>smile spread across her face, as she whispered her name.

>Lexi: Mommy.

> Elizabeth smiled and pulled the girl into her arms. Lexi wrapped her
arms around Elizabeth's neck and held on tightly. Elizabeth ran her hand up

>and down her back, talking soothingly.

>Liz: You're safe now, sweetie. No one's ever going to hurt you again...We
missed you so much.

>
 Lexi pulled back from her mother and blinked back her own tears.

>Lucky came to kneel next to Elizabeth and in front of his daughter. He
spoke, his voice trembling with emotion.

>
Lucky: We missed you so much, Lexi...Every minute without you hurt so

>much...We are so glad that you're back with us...We love you so much...Always
remember that and carry it with you.

>
 Lexi smiled, nodding her head. Her little voice emerged soft and

>shaken...Her parents had never heard a more beautiful sound.

>Lexi: I love you, too...I missed you and Lorenzo so much...I...I was scared,
mommy and daddy.

>
 Lucky and Elizabeth could feel their hearts breaking again. Her lips

>were quivering and her eyes seemed to have lost so much...Sarah had done
that...They wondered if their little girl would ever be the same again.

>
Liz: We know, honey...And we were scared for you....You must have been so

>confused.

> Lexi nodded in agreement.

>Lexi: She told me that you didn't want me anymore because I was bad...She
said you didn't love me anymore....I knew she was lying, I know that you love

>me...I knew that no matter what I did you would always love me.

> Lucky and Elizabeth nodded, they thanked God that she had always
known that.

>
Lucky: That's right, Lexi. We will always love you, nothing can change

>that...I am sorry-

> Lucky stopped, his emotions overtaking him. He ran a hand through
his hair and began again.

>
Lucky: I am so sorry that I couldn't keep you safe. I promised you that I

>would always protect you and I failed....I am sorry, baby.

> Lexi smiled sweetly and walked over to her father. She kissed his

cheek and then looked at him.
>
Lexi: It's not your fault, daddy...It was Aunt Sarah's....Why
did she take me
>away?

> Lucky and Elizabeth glanced at each other. Sarah's dead body lay

behind them and Lexi had witnessed her death. She had been
through so much
>and she was too young to understand most of it. Lucky and Elizabeth
knew
that they should be feeling guilt or sadness for the loss of
Sarah, but that
>was an emotion they just couldn't bring themselves to feel right
then. They
knew she was sick...It was something biological,
something she couldn't
>control. But it couldn't erase the pain she had caused them and
their
daughter...It couldn't wash away all that they had
felt...It could make all
>of their fears disappear...It couldn't bring back the days that they
had lost
with her...It couldn't take away her sins and it
couldn't turn back
>time...They did what they had to do and they couldn't make
themselves regret
that.
>
 Lucky licked his lips and prepared to speak.
>
Lucky: Lexi, Aunt Sarah was very sick in her head. She was
confused and she
>made a mistake when she took you.

> Lexi nodded in understanding and stared past her parents at the
blood
on the floor. She stated stoically.
>
Lexi: She's dead.
>
 Lucky and Elizabeth both nodded. Right then, the seriousness of
what
>Lucky had really done hit him. It had been in self defense, he had
no
choice, but it didn't make the realization any easier. He had
taken a life.
>His hands were responsible for taking someone's life. He had never
ended
anyone's life before...and he had never known that he was
capable of it until
>then. Now, he knew. When pushed far enough, he was capable of ending

another's life. The feeling that washed over him at that moment
were
>indescribable. He was forever changed, an unsettling feeling had
taken root
in his mind and heart. He knew that he didn't deserve
the guilt and he
>wasn't feeling any. It was something more, something different. It
was the
kind of thing that comes with discovering of a part of
one's self that you've
>never even thought possible...The unearthing of new feelings and
emotions, of
new aspects of life and its meaning...He would never
feel the same again and
>he knew that he would have to deal with that fact.

> Lucky stood up and then picked up Lexi in his arms. Lexi wrapped
her
arms around his neck. Elizabeth came forward and wrapped her
arms around her
>daughter and husband...They were together again and they felt safe
in one
another's arms...One thing was for sure, God had smiled
down on them that
>day...Something had made Lexi move that little bit in that split
second for
she surely would have been hit by the bullet if she
hadn't...Something that
>could only be explained, if it could be explained at all, with one

word:
miracle.

>
:::~::~

>
 Lucky and Liz slowly opened the door that separated them from of the

>rest of the world. The door opened, revealing the darkness of the
night...and two shocked individuals. Lucky and Elizabeth made their way down

>to the ground. Only then were Luke and Laura able to get to their feet and
manage some form of speech.

>
Luke: How the hell is this possible?!....Oh, who gives a damn! You're all

>fine and that's what matters!

>Laura: Oh my God!...Thank you!...You're all okay!

> Before Lucky and Liz could ask how they had come there, Luke and
Laura were suffocating them with hugs. The whole Spencer clan finally

>separated and Luke and Laura looked at their granddaughter.

>Luke: Darlin', we missed you like hell...We are so glad to have you back safe
and sound.

>
Laura: Sweetie, thank God you're safe...You'll never know just how much we

>missed you and worried about you.

> Lexi smiled and reached her arms out to her grandparents. They came
forward, unable to curb their tears. Each of Lexi's arms wrapped around one

>of her grandparent's necks, as they whispered how much they loved her. They
finally released her back to her parents and Lucky spoke up.

>
Lucky: How did you guys know where we were?

>
Luke: We found the last clue at my club.

>
 Lucky and Liz both nodded. Luke let his eyes wander into the

>interior of the boxcar. He could see traces of blood. He looked back at his
son and at the slight flesh wound on his arm.

>
Luke: Are you okay?

>
 Lucky looked down at his wound and nodded.

>
Lucky: Yeah, the bullet just grazed me.

>
 Luke nodded and pulled off his cumberbund. He wrapped it tightly

>around Lucky's arm to control what little bleeding there still was. Luke
searched Lucky's tired and clouded eyes.

>
Luke: What happened?

>
 Lucky took a deep breath before speaking.

>
Lucky: We finished the clues with time to spare, but Sarah said that our time

>had run out. She was ready to kill...kill Lexi when I stalled her. I kept
stalling, but she said that she was on a suicide mission. Finally, the

>moment came where I had no choice, I pulled my gun and she aimed hers. Liz
was in front of me and two bullets came toward us. One grazed me and the

>other didn't hit us because I pushed us out of the way. I shot at the same
moment, but Sarah had pulled Lexi in front of her as a shield. Somehow, I

>guess Lexi moved a little at the last second and the bullet hit Sarah's
chest...She's dead.

>
 Luke and Laura watched their son's eyes as he relayed the last part.

>They could tell it pained him. Laura reached out and touched his

arm. She
spoke softly.

>
Laura: It wasn't you're fault, Lucky...You did what you had to do.

>
 Lucky nodded and responded with a simple phrase that couldn't change

>how he now felt.

>Lucky: I know.

> Luke patted his son's shoulder and smiled at him.

>Luke: I am proud of you, son...You took care of your family, you did what you
had to do...You have my respect now more than ever.

>
 Lucky looked up into his father's eyes and saw that they were masked

>with emotion. Luke would never know how much those words would help Lucky
come to terms with the act he had committed.

>
Lucky: Thanks, Dad.

>
 With that, the family left the crime scene and headed for home. Luke

>called Mac, told him the situation, and the police came and took Sarah's body.

> The Spencer family entered their house, after having Lucky's arm
looked at and Lexi checked at the hospital. For the first time in a long

>time, it felt warm and like home again, it felt complete. Lucky and
Elizabeth knew that Lexi was tired and that she needed to sleep. They slowly

>made their way up the stairs. On their way, they stopped at Lorenzo's room.
He was asleep, a babysitter had put him to bed. They quietly walked in, Lexi

>in their arms. They didn't want to wake him, but they felt he needed to know
that his sister was back. Lucky sat down on the side of the bed and

>Elizabeth on the other, with Lexi in her lap. Lucky brushed back his
sleeping son's hair and whispered quietly into his ear.

>
Lucky: Lorenzo...Cowboy, wake up...We have a surprise for you.

>
 Lorenzo stirred slowly and his eyelids gently fluttered open. He

>looked confused at first and then his eyes fell on Lexi. They widened and he
seemed to be studying her to be positive that she was real, as if it was some

>cruel dream from which she would vanish from at any moment.

>Lorenzo: Lexi?

> Lexi smiled and touched her brother's hand.

>Lexi: Hi, Lorenzo.

> Lorenzo's eyes immediately lit up and he hurriedly sat upright in
bed. Then he leaned forward, throwing his arms around Lexi's neck and

>squeezing tightly.

>Lorenzo: You're back!...You came back!...Me missed you so much!

> Lexi smiled and held tightly to her brother.

>Lexi: I missed you, too.

> Lorenzo pulled back and looked at his parents, his eyes asking a
million questions at once. But his mouth only said two.

>
Lorenzo: Who took, Lexi?...Why?

>
 Elizabeth and Lucky glanced at each other, unsure of what to

say.

>They realized that lying to him would do no one any good. He would

eventually find out anyway, at least this way they could explain
it to him in

>terms he could understand. Lucky licked his lips and began.

>Lucky: Cowboy, Aunt Sarah took Lexi because she is very sick in her
head.

> Lorenzo stared at his father, a strange look of disbelief on his

face. After a few seconds, he asked another question.

>
Lorenzo: Is she going to jail like other bad guys do?

>
 Elizabeth bit her lip and looked over at Lucky. What did they
say to

>that? Usually, they explained deaths to the children by saying that
the
person had gone to heaven. But was that really the case in
this situation?

>Lucky looked away from Elizabeth and only responded with a simple
answer,
Lorenzo would learn more once he grew older.

>
Lorenzo: Aunt Sarah has already paid for doing the bad things
that she did.

>
 Lorenzo looked at his father, wondering what that meant
exactly. For

>a moment it seemed as if he would ask another question, but then he
only
shook his head. Elizabeth leaned forward and kissed him on
the forehead,

>gently guiding him back down to his pillow.

>Liz: Goodnight, honey...I love you.

> Lorenzo returned the sentiment and then hugged his father as he

leaned down to tuck him in.

>
Lucky: Dreams of gold, Cowboy...I love you.

>
 Lorenzo smiled and kissed his father's cheek. Lucky and
Elizabeth

>took Lexi's hand, leading her to the door. Once they had turned out
the
lights and had almost left the room, they heard a tiny voice
just above a

>whisper break through the silent darkness.

>Lorenzo: I am glad you're home, Lexi...I love you a lot.

> Lexi's smile could almost be seen through the darkness that
separated
the brother and sister. She answered just as softly.

>
Lexi: So am I...I love you, too.

>
 Lucky and Elizabeth could feel their hearts aching with an
abundance

>of love and happiness at the gestures by their children that they
had just
witnessed. The tears stung their eyes, but now they were
only tears of joy.

>
:::~::~

>
 Lucky and Elizabeth brought Lexi into the bathroom and gave her
a

>bath. After the bath, all three went into her room and they tucked
her into
bed. They couldn't even describe what they felt at that
moment. The room

>that had felt like a tomb since she'd been gone, had been
transformed back
into its original form...A warm and cozy room
for the little girl that it had

>sorely missed.

> Lucky and Elizabeth had to struggle to control their tears as they

tucked her into her bed...They both leaned down and kissed her

forehead,
>lingering a little longer than usual. They would never take another moment
together for granted again...Every second more that they had been given with
>her was a gift that they intended to treasure. Lucky and Elizabeth got up
from her bed and walked to the door, stopping at it to admire their beautiful
>daughter. They were just about to close the door, when they heard her voice.

>Lexi: Leave it open..Just a little, please.

> Lucky nodded, leaving the door open for her before they left. Then
he whispered into the darkness..
>
Lexi: Dreams of gold, darlin'.
>
 They closed the door a little before leaving. Lucky and Elizabeth
>looked into each others eyes, before falling into one anothers arms.

>Liz: I can't believe we've got her back, Lucky...I never let myself truly
believe it because I didn't want to suffer even more when it didn't
>happen...But she's back with us, Lucky...Our family is complete again.

> Lucky smiled and kissed Elizabeth's lips.

>Lucky: Yes, we do and we're never going to let anything happen to it
again...God has given us a second chance, Elizabeth, and we're going to make
>the most of it.

> Elizabeth nodded and stroked his cheek gently.

>Liz: You're right, Lucky...God saw us through this and I'll never doubt him
again...We can get through anything as long as we're together and have our
>faith.

> With that, Lucky and Elizabeth walked hand in hand down the stairs.

>::::::::::

> Lucky and Elizabeth entered the living room, where Luke and Laura sat
in conversation. They looked up at them as they entered, smiling widely.
>Luke got up from his seat and walked to his son.

>Luke: Why don't we go get everyone a drink, son?

> Lucky nodded and lead his son out of the room. Elizabeth sat down
next to her mother-in-law and let out a sigh of relief. Laura patted her
>hand.

>Laura: It's all over.

> Elizabeth nodded and sank back into the couch. Laura watched her,
waiting for the moment when it would hit her. She watched as it slowly
>approached, the tears streaming slowly down her face. She covered her face
with her hands and mumbled.
>
Liz: It's over, but it's only begun in so many ways! Lexi will never be the
>same. She will have to go through counseling...And my sister...she..she's
dead. My own flesh and blood kidnapped my daughter and now she's dead.
>
 Laura looked at Elizabeth, various emotions clouding every part of
>her eyes. She spoke softly.

>Laura: Elizabeth, Lexi will be fine, you just have to give her time...And
Sarah, well it's natural to feel a loss, she was still

your sister no matter
>what she's done.

> Elizabeth nodded through tears.

>Liz: I know, but it's so confusing. I feel like I should hate her
for what
she's done. But then I feel like I should feel sorry for
her because she was
>obviously sick. And then I wonder if I should be mourning the loss
of
her...I don't know how to feel.
>
 Laura nodded, eventhough she couldn't possibly understand what

>Elizabeth was going through. She had spent twenty-eight years loving
her
sister, despite all of their problems. She always loved her
and thought that
>the feelings were reciprocated...Maybe they had been at some point,
but hours
ago that had all changed. Sarah became a person she had
never known...and
>now she was gone.

>Laura: Elizabeth, it's okay to feel all of those things. You've
suffered a
loss today and you have to deal with that. You have to
come to terms with it
>and if that means dealing with all of those emotions, then so be
it...It's
just going to take time.
>
 Elizabeth nodded and leaned forward.
>
Liz: Only one thing really matters, we have Lexi back.
>
 Laura nodded and pulled Elizabeth to her in a hug.

>
Laura: You're right, that's what's most important.

>
:::~::~
>
 Luke placed a hand on Lucky's shoulder, stopping his exit from
the
>kitchen. Lucky turned around and faced his father.

>Luke: How are you doing?

> Lucky looked at his father and shrugged.

>Lucky: I'm doing great...I have my little girl back.

> Luke shook his head and looked his son in the eye.

>Luke: You know that's not what I meant.

> Lucky averted his eyes and looked down at the floor. His father's

statement at the boxcar had helped alleviate some of what he felt,
but not all
>of it. He looked back up and into his father's own eyes.

>Lucky: I don't know what to feel...I've never killed anyone
before...I didn't
think I could do it...Now I know I can.
>
 Luke nodded in understanding.
>
Luke: It's a strange feeling when you take someone's life for
the first time.
> It's no secret that I have killed before...But I never wanted you
to
experience what I have. Self defense or not, it still weighs
on your
>conscience, it lives inside of you...You realize that your not
exactly who
you thought you were...You see yourself from a
different perspective...It
>changes you, Lucky. I can't lie to you. You realize what you're
capable of
and you wonder what else you could do if pushed far
enough...You never get
>used to it, son, but you learn to live with it.

> Lucky nodded, noticing how his father's eyes were filled with a

darkness of crimes committed and feelings lived with.

>
Lucky: I know, Dad...It's just so strange. I saw the blood, I saw her body
>and I knew I caused that. I knew that I caused her to take her last breath.
I know I had no choice and I don't regret it. I don't really feel
>guilty...I...I just feel different.

> Luke nodded solemnly, knowing all too well how Lucky now felt.

>Luke: I know, son...But know this. You did what you had to do out of

necessity, I can't always claim the same thing. You have more dignity and
>honor than this whole damn town put together.

> Lucky blushed and looked down. His father continued.

>Luke: Do you remember what I said to you right before we thought you died?

> Lucky looked back up and nodded at his father, but remained silent.

>Luke: I said "I may be taller, but you're my hero."

> Luke could feel his tears begin to threaten as he relived the moment.
His throat choked with emotion as he finished.

>
Luke: And after all these years, you're still my hero, Lucky...I've never
>been more proud to call you my son.

> Luke smiled and touched his right hand to Lucky's cheek. Lucky could
feel his tears trailing down his face and managed to whisper with a smile...
>
Lucky: And you don't have that taller thing going for you anymore either.
>
 Both father and son laughed with one another, before gravitating
>towards each other to come together in a hug.

>::::::::::

> Lucky and Luke re-entered the living room and sat next to their
wives. Suddenly, the sounds of thunder echoed outside of the house.
>Elizabeth looked at Lucky.

>Liz: We should check on Lexi...I am sure she's a little scared after all
she's been through.
>
 Lucky nodded and they both excused themselves. They walked up to
>Lexi's room and slowly opened the door. They stepped inside and found her
holding onto Boris tightly, her eyes still open. They sat down on the edge of
>her bed.

>Lucky: Did the thunder scare you?

> Lexi shook her head with a smile.

>Lexi: No, I remembered what you said. That when it thunders, it's the angels
singing...The angels kept me safe while I was away.

>
 Elizabeth and Lucky smiled, nodding at their daughter.

>
Liz: That's right, they are always watching over you.
>
 Lexi smiled and looked up at her father.
>
Lexi: Daddy, will you sing to me?...I missed that a lot every night.
>
 Lucky felt his heart swell with love as he nodded.

>
Lucky: Of course I will.
>
 Lexi smiled, while Lucky and Elizabeth each took one of her

hands in

>their own. Lucky began softly, looking at Elizabeth at first. She would
remember this song, he played it the first time he asked her to be his girl.

>She smiled at him warmly and then they both looked at their daughter.
Lucky's voice came out strong and with a gentleness that had been previously

>unmatched.

>~I've got sunshine on a cloudy day
And when it's cold outside I've got the month of May~

>
~I guess you'll say

>What can make me feel this way?
My girl, I'm talkin' 'bout my girl~

>
~I've got so much honey the bees envy me

>I've got a sweeter song than the birds in the tree~

>~I guess you'll say
What can make me feel this way?

>My girl, I'm talkin' 'bout my girl~

>~Hey, hey, hey
Hey, hey, hey~

>
~I don't need money, fortune or fame

>I got all the riches, baby, that one man can claim~

>~I guess you'll say
What can make me feel this way?

>My girl, talkin' 'bout my girl~

>~I've got so much honey the bees envy me
I got a sweeter song than the birds in the tree

>Don't need no fortune, no money or fame
'cause when I got my girl, I got all the riches one man can claim

>Talkin' 'bout my girl, yeah my girl~

> Lucky smiled at Lexi as he finished the song. Elizabeth had tears
streaming down her face as she watched her husband sing to their daughter.

>He blinked back tears and touched the tip of Lexi's nose with his finger.

>Lucky: I have two special girls...And they both have made my life so happy.

> Elizabeth placed her hand over Lucky's, her lips spread into a smile.
Lexi nodded and grinned.

>
Lexi: That was pretty, daddy...Thank you.

>
 Lucky nodded and leaned closer to her face, whispering...

>
Lucky: Thank you.

>
 Lucky kissed her cheek and then sat back. A sudden question popped

>into his head and he looked down at Lexi.

>Lucky: Lexi, sweetie, what made you move right before Aunt Sarah was hurt?

> A slow smile spread across Lexi's lips and her blue eyes twinkled as
if she held a wonderful secret. She opened her mouth slightly and whispered

>her answer...

>Lexi: It was my angel...He pushed me over a little bit...He saved me.

> Lucky and Elizabeth's eyes widened when they heard that, but they
simply nodded. They couldn't question it, what had happened had to be the

>work of God...They believed that and there was no reason to question
her...God had helped them when they needed Him the most...He hadn't failed

>them.

>::::::::::

> Outside the open door, stood Luke and Laura, their arms wrapped

around each other. Luke looked at Laura and smiled...

>
Luke: Well, I guess your God came through after all.

>
 Laura smiled and nodded.

>
Laura: Does that mean you believe now?

>
 Luke grinned and shrugged...

>
Luke: Well, I didn't say that.

>
 Laura shook her head with a smile and they both joined the others in

>the room. They stood around with one another, a sleepy Lorenzo also

wandering in and crawling into his father's lap. And there they stood, a

>family torn by tragedy and brought back together by nothing short of a

miracle. They had suffered, fought and won. They were a family again and

>they would never forget the special meaning that that word holds.

The future
was theirs and Lexi would get the chance to experience all that she was meant

>to...Life was theirs to be lived to the fullest...and they would do it
together.

>
 Luke looked around at the smiling faces of his family, the love in

>his heart almost too much to contain. A slow smile crept across his face, as
he gently lifted his face up to the ceiling and whispered words so soft that

>only the one they were meant for could hear...

>Luke: Thank you.

>::~THE

END~::

>I just want to thank you for reading this story. I hope you enjoyed it as much as I
enjoyed writing it. There were many difficult things to deal with in this story, so thank you for sticking with it. This was a very different story for me and it allowed me

>to write things that I had never written before. It was a wonderful

experience. Thank you all for taking the time to read. If you have any comments, please feel free to share them with me.~Steph

>
Poem was "Why God Made Little Girls" by author unknown.

>Song was~"Butterfly Kisses" by Bob Carlisle.
Song was~"My Girl" by The Temptations

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